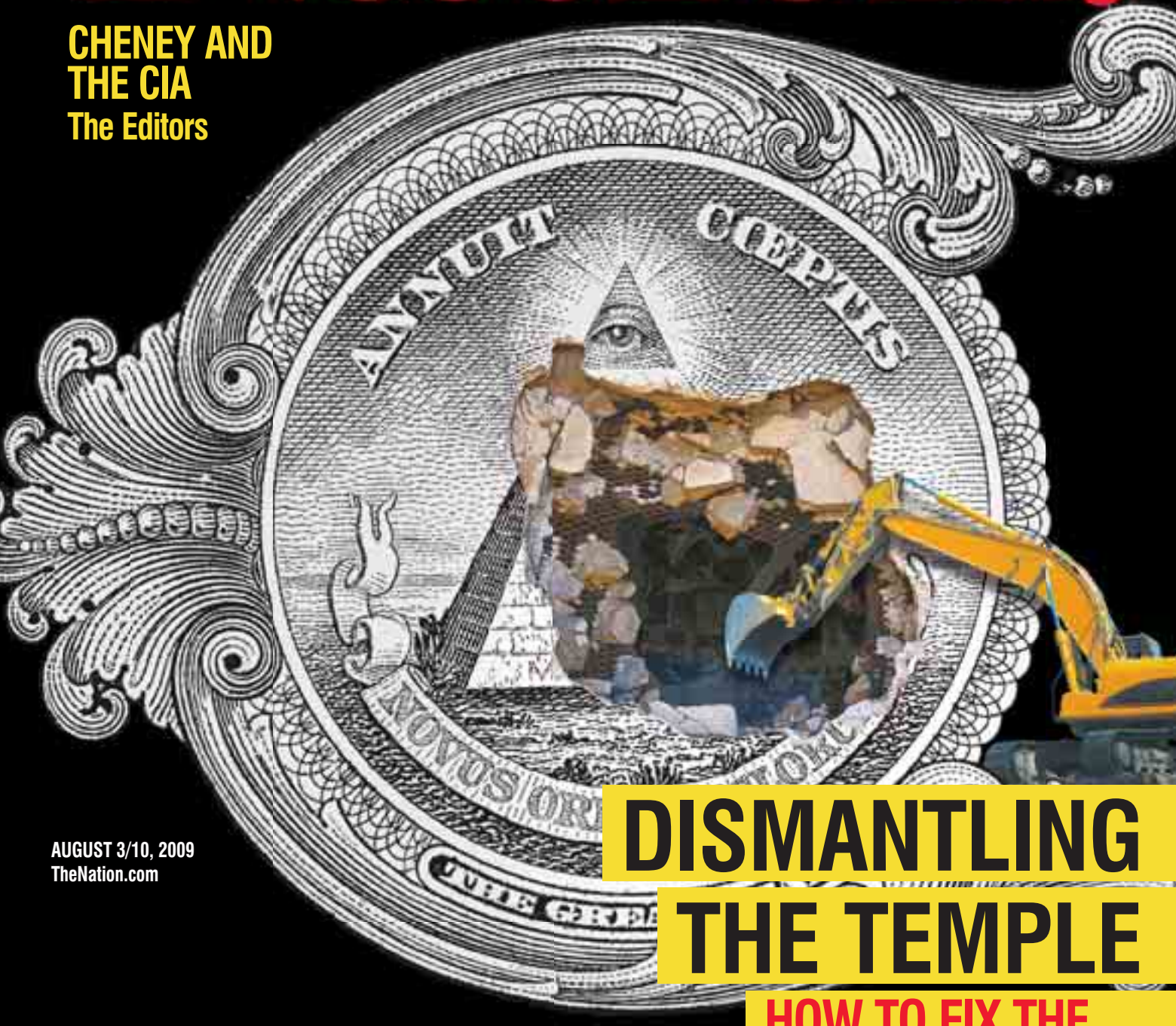
REMEMBERING McNAMARA • JONATHAN SCHELL

THE Nation.

DOUBLE ISSUE

CHENEY AND THE CIA

The Editors



DISMANTLING THE TEMPLE

HOW TO FIX THE FEDERAL RESERVE

WILLIAM GREIDER

AUGUST 3/10, 2009
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Letters

College? Not Unless You're Rich

Marble, Colo.
Liza Featherstone's "Out of Reach: Is College Only for the Rich?" [June 29] spoke to me in a very personal way. I will soon turn 21, but due to illness I have completed only one year's worth of credits for my BA. I will have to spend the next fourteen months working and saving in order to afford to return to college in the fall of 2010. I am so frustrated by my inability to afford higher education, which I believe is a vital part of our democracy and should be accessible to all citizens. Until everyone has access to college, our country will not break down the barrier between the wealthy and the underprivileged.
Melissa Sidelinger

Centerport, N.Y.
I graduated from Brooklyn College when it was free. Otherwise, my parents could not have afforded to send me to college. That has made all the difference in my life, enabling me to get a well-paying job and continue to graduate school rather than having to resort to welfare when my husband left me with a 2-year-old and pregnant.

My father, the first in his family to attend college, graduated from City College at the height of the Depression. When CUNY decided to charge tuition, I wrote a letter in opposition. They told me that since middle-class students were attending free, poor taxpayers were subsidizing them; it would be more equitable to charge tuition, which the middle class could afford, and provide scholarship aid to poorer students. Predictably, tuition continued to increase and scholarship aid declined. If New York City could provide free, quality higher education during the Great Depression, surely it is time to return to that practice now.
Ruth A. Brandwein, PhD

Princeton, N.J.
Liza Featherstone notes that students are largely resigned to increased college costs. Others have observed a similar quiescence on the part of labor. It looks like many of us still hold ourselves responsible for success or lack thereof. The Horatio Alger myth was alive in the Great Depression, but so were street actions and sit-down strikes. It was popular militancy, after all, that enabled FDR to push through the progressive legislation of the mid-1930s. Americans, especially students, should take to the streets.
Midge Quandt

Dr. George Tiller

Chicago
In his article "A Culture War Casualty" [June 22] Eyal Press underscores the truth that those who use hateful invectives should not feign shock or dismay when their message produces murder and violence. This article, however, like the majority of others I have read following the death of George Tiller, MD, is fixated upon the abortion debate and neglects to recognize the real tragedy of Dr. Tiller's loss, to the profession of medicine and to the American people.

As a practitioner of maternal fetal medicine, I referred two patients to Dr. Tiller because he was one of the very few physicians in the country who, because of both permissive Kansas state law and his desire to give compassionate care, provided late-pregnancy termination services. Both of my referrals were carrying infants with birth defects that were incompatible with survival. One fetus had anencephaly, a condition where a large portion of the forebrain is absent; the other, a syndrome called the pentalogy of cantrell, characterized by multiple midline defects, allowing vital organs such as the heart and the abdominal structures to lie outside the fetal body. Dr. Tiller accepted my referrals graciously and cared for these women skillfully. By so doing, he ended their risk of further complications.

The clamor of the "abortion debate" has overshadowed the essence of the medical issue: how to provide the best care to our patients. In all my years of medical practice,

(continued on page 26)

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The Cheney Gang

When Congress investigated the Iran/Contra scandal twenty-two years ago, the Republican Representative from Wyoming argued that in matters of national security, executives should do as they please—the legislative branch be damned. This radical position, so completely at odds with the system of checks and balances established by the framers, might have been lost to history except for the fact that the Wyoming Congressman would eventually become the most powerful vice president the nation has ever known. It has long been evident to many that Dick Cheney's refusal to "bear true faith and allegiance" to the Constitution did much to define the Bush/Cheney co-presidency. Until recently, however, it seemed unlikely that Cheney and his lieutenants would be held to account or that the proper constitutional balance would be restored.

EDITORIAL

Even after Bush and Cheney left office, Democratic Congressional leaders proved unwilling to tackle Cheney's abuses or the issues raised by them. President Obama, fearing a protracted inquiry, said he wanted to "look forward." But that stance grew difficult to maintain as revelations about deliberate assaults on the rule of law kept coming. After CIA director Leon Panetta informed Congress in late June of an illegal covert program that had been concealed from Congress, news reports outlined how Cheney had ordered the agency to keep the House and Senate intelligence committees in the dark.

The balance started to tip against Cheney. Senate majority whip Dick Durbin said there "absolutely" must be an Intelligence Committee investigation of the operation—which reportedly involved assassination plots. Intelligence Committee chair Dianne Feinstein, usually cautious, said Cheney operated "outside the law." Russ Feingold, another committee member, who also chairs the Judiciary Committee's Constitution subcommittee, said the program was "a violation of the National Security Act" and that people "who ordered that Congress be kept in the dark should be held accountable."

At the same time, Attorney General Eric Holder signaled a new openness to investigating the Bush regime's interrogation practices. Such an inquiry would focus on abuses other than the covert CIA program, but the constant appears to be Cheney, whose office has repeatedly been linked to the previous administration's torture fetish.

It is clear that inquiries should proceed on all fronts, not from a desire to "get Cheney" but from recognition that accountability is necessary if we are to restore the system of checks and balances. Even if Holder appoints a prosecutor, Congress still has a duty to engage. As Tim Weiner, author of the National Book Award–winning *Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA*, argued in these pages in June, "Congress has a responsibility to oversee the CIA that remains largely unfulfilled. It has to ask the right questions, demand full answers and report the facts annually to the American people." All too often, Congress has abandoned this duty, not only during the Bush administration but during previous ones, of both parties.

The investigations should be broadly defined, but their purpose made clear. If a vice president ordered the CIA to deceive Congress, he broke the law and violated his oath of office. The only way to assure that this "should never, ever happen again"—Feinstein's goal—is to hold him fully to account. Anything less would lend dangerous legitimacy to Cheney's imperial project. His machinations confirm the wisdom of having Congress members—and attorneys general—swear an oath to defend the Constitution from threats foreign *and* domestic.

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John Nichols: Congress targets Cheney

Gerald Caplan: Obama in Africa

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The G-8 Abdicates

When leaders of the G-8 club of rich economies gathered in L'Aquila, Italy, in early July, one of the most pressing items on the agenda was to advance a global agreement on climate change. But the environmental news from the meeting was not good. The developed countries failed to take robust action toward radically reducing their carbon dioxide emissions. In response the two largest and dirtiest developing economies, India and China, rejected earlier proposals to radically reduce their own greenhouse gas emissions. If rich economies won't sacrifice, why should they?

EDITORIAL

The North-versus-South climate-change blame game is on. This does not bode well for December's Copenhagen Climate Conference, at which the nations of the world will attempt to halt climate change with a successor agreement to the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, which sought and largely failed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

If there is any good news, it is this: the G-8 economies did agree that average global temperatures should not increase more than 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) above average preindustrial levels. They also pledged to cut their carbon emissions 80 percent by the year 2050 and called on developing economies to reduce their carbon emissions by 50 percent during the same period. However, the crucial question remains: 80 percent below what? The G-8 economies could not even agree on a baseline against which to measure the promised reductions. Europe says reductions should be benchmarked at 1990 levels. The United States wants the baseline pegged to current emissions.

The rich economies also refused to commit themselves to the huge funding necessary to assist developing countries in retooling their economies away from fossil fuels. Many experts believe $150 billion a year is needed for developing nations to make the switch from dirty coal and oil to carbon-neutral forms of energy.

Worse yet is that the G-8's stated goal—no more than a 2 degree increase in global average temperatures and 80 percent emissions reductions by 2050—is probably inadequate. For one thing, 2 degrees is a global average, which therefore implies a much larger temperature increase at the poles (probably 4 to 6 degrees). That would almost assure the melting of the polar ice caps and trigger new reactions, like the release of methane gas trapped under the Arctic permafrost. Methane is a greenhouse gas twenty-three times more powerful than carbon dioxide. The Arctic methane belch could accelerate global warming, making the process irreversible.

The earth is already experiencing some of these reactions. For example, diminished sea ice means less of the sun's heat is reflected back into space and more is absorbed by the dark ocean water. The warmer the earth becomes, the faster it will warm.

Leading climate scientists, like James Hansen and George Woodwell, say that to prevent temperatures from rising by 2 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels, atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide must not exceed 350 parts per million.

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Noted.

GOOD MEDICINE: "When you're face to face with a patient, you can't worry about the fact that they can't pay," says Dr. **Regina Benjamin**, **Barack Obama**'s Surgeon General nominee. After an unsettling flirtation with TV-doctor **Sanjay Gupta**—which caused an outcry from single-payer proponents angered by Gupta's bashing of public programs—Obama opted for a **MacArthur Foundation** "genius grant" recipient whose career has been spent as a family doctor in the low-income, multiethnic, Hurricane Katrina–battered community of Bayou La Batre, Alabama. When Benjamin says, "It should not be this hard for doctors and other healthcare providers to care for their patients," she speaks from experience. Just as significant, Benjamin highlights the essential role of publicly organized and funded healthcare programs—as she did at the announcement of her nomination with shout-outs to the **US Public Health Service Commission Corps** and the **National Health Service Corps**, of which she is an alumna. There could not be a better advocate for maintaining a robust public option in any healthcare reform plan. JOHN NICHOLS

WIN FOR WORKERS: Workers at **Hartmarx Corporation** won a big victory in June when a bankruptcy court approved its sale to **Emerisque Brands** and **SKNL North America**. After the Illinois-based manufacturer, which produces Hart Schaffner Marx and Hickey Freeman clothing, declared bankruptcy in January, **Workers United**, the union that represents its employees, launched a campaign to resist pressure from creditors, led by **Wells Fargo**, to liquidate the firm [see "Social Unionism Lives," June 15]. While other bidders intended to break up Hartmarx, **Emerisque** promised to keep manufacturing its brands in the United States.

The 3,000 Hartmarx jobs are a drop in the bucket compared with the 1.5 million manufacturing jobs that have been lost in the past year. But as Workers United president **Bruce Raynor** commented, the Hartmarx struggle "shows we can save manufacturing jobs.... The banks are not immune to pressure" when they make "quick-buck decisions." The workers' threat to occupy Hartmarx factories helped generate attention. Raynor believes that taking over plants "might be the kind of thing workers will have to do" to keep their jobs. JOSHUA FREEMAN

PRICE OF DIPLOMACY: Candidate **Barack Obama** famously promised to change "the culture in Washington" by ushering in a new kind of foreign policy and a renewal of public service. One relatively easy reform would be the elimination or severe reduction of noncareer ambassadorial appointments, ending a spoils system where presidential friends and contributors are selected as America's face to the world.

Since the Kennedy administration, in a practice unique among Western democracies, 30 to 40 percent of US ambassadors have been appointees. As of July, 60 percent of Obama's picks have been political, including many who have given considerable amounts of campaign cash to the president and fellow Democrats. Take Obama's recent appointment of former **Goldman Sachs** banker **Philip Murphy** as ambassador to Germany. According to the **Center for Responsive Politics**, Murphy and his wife have given $1.5 million to federal candidates since 1989, 94 percent of that to Democrats, not to mention the $100,000 they contributed to Obama's inauguration committee. CRP also found that sixteen other appointments were linked to some $6.8 million for Obama's campaign and inaugural festivities. Among them are investment banker **Louis Susman**, ambassador to Britain, and lawyer **John Roos**, ambassador to Japan. Neither man has diplomatic training—Roos does not even speak Japanese—but the two bundled $900,000 for Obama's campaign and inauguration. SEBASTIAN JONES

POLLITT, POET: Only last year, longtime *Nation* favorite **Katha Pollitt** was stirring up the blogosphere with the personal essays she collected in *Learning to Drive: And Other Life Stories* (now in paperback). Her new collection, **The Mind-Body Problem** (Random House), is a book of poems, and the two books would make for a provocative and satisfying boxed set.

Readers who revel in Pollitt's crisp humor, soundly made sentences and memorable comparisons will find plenty to savor in these poems, often as playful as they are moving. The landscape here is friendly ground: the intersecting lives of New York City, the peculiar habits of memory and the lively presence of literary and historical characters in the life of the mind.

While *The Mind-Body Problem* is steeped in compassion for the human condition, it's also a righteously graceful dossier on the misuses of power and the resulting waste of human spirit. Whether she's writing about the deadly days of **Jane Austen** heroines ("Talk about rural idiocy!") or channeling **Job** after that little incident with the boils ("People even said he looked taller / in his fine new robes: *You see? / When one door closes, two doors open*"), she asks us to ask ourselves, Just who's in charge here, anyway? Can we as vulnerable people—lovers, mothers, children, writers, citizens—speak truth and humor to power and make a stand worth recording? Pollitt's book answers with a triumphant and confident yes. EMILY GORDON

COOKIE CRUMBLES: **Stella D'oro**, the famed New York cookiemaker, announced on July 6 that it will close its Bronx factory in October, leaving more than 130 workers without jobs. Stella D'oro's owners, the private equity firm **Brynwood Partners**, made the announcement just days after a judge ordered the company to reinstate its workers, who had been on strike since August 2008 after Brynwood tried to impose deep wage and benefit cuts.

Brynwood bought Stella D'oro from **Kraft Foods** in 2006 for $17.5 million but now claims that the cookiemaker is "not sustainable" and needs to reduce labor costs. When the workers, members of **Local 50** of the **Bakery, Confectionery, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers International Union**, fought back, Brynwood decided to simply close shop. This business model is all too typical of the private equity ownership approach, according to **Stephen Lerner**, director of the **Private Equity Project** at **SEIU**. "Being merely profitable isn't good enough for private equity: they need to cut costs to the bone to generate the returns they promised their investors. The quickest and easiest way to cut costs is to go after workers." IVONNE SALAZAR

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Now comes the really bad news: we are already at 387 ppm. And at current rates, atmospheric concentrations of CO_2 are set to double by the middle of the century. If that happens—which is very likely unless emissions are radically reduced soon—sea levels, already expected to rise three feet in this century, would rise even further, inundating urban areas and decimating the economies of the United States, Europe and Asia. This would utterly transform civilization as we know it.

Scientific fact is not an interest group that can be swayed or negotiated with. If 350 ppm as is far as CO_2 concentrations can go, there is no way to persuade the earth to accept 450 ppm. Obama's consensus-building pragmatism might be effective in other arenas, but in the realm of climate change, it won't work. The same goes for the Waxman-Markey bill, which recently passed from the House to the Senate. The bill seeks to strip the Environmental Protection Agency of crucial powers to regulate coal plants and sets the bar for emissions cuts far too low.

Two things have to happen: the United States and the other rich economies must cut their carbon emissions radically and quickly; and there must be massive investment in developing alternative energy sources. Although China is the largest greenhouse gas emitter, it is the past industrialization of Europe and the United States that caused most of the problem. Even in the context of the global financial crisis, the wealthy economies must find a way to pony up. They must spend enormous sums of money to subsidize the transformation of developing economies away from coal and oil toward carbon-neutral forms of green energy like wind, solar and tidal kinetics. Call it climate reparations—or simply a survival strategy for the planet.

Calvin Trillin, Deadline Poet

Hush, Little Cindy

(A version of the classic lullaby, as sung to the former paramour of John Ensign, the only veterinarian in the Senate, by his parents while giving her and her family a $96,000 gift)

Hush, little Cindy, don't say a word.
No one's going to know just what's occurred.
If you'd like a swimming pool,
Cindy and her hubby must stay real cool.
If you want that diamond ring,
Purge your thoughts of Larry King.
Hush, little Cindy, don't say a word.
This whole thing must go unheard.
Don't you help those godless rats
Send John back to dogs and cats.

Healthcare: Heat Is On

As the healthcare reform fight unfolds in Washington, one can imagine that this summer will be remembered in one of three ways. In one account, healthcare reform marks the moment when Democrats learned to work with advocacy groups to enforce party unity and push for the most progressive legislation possible. Another version is a familiar caution to progressives who are told they are too idealistic: liberals are demanding more than the Senate can swallow, and that could prevent anything passing at all. The third is perhaps the most familiar—much is compromised in the name of pragmatism, and the bill that passes isn't strong enough to get the job done.

COMMENT

That seemed to be the track that the Senate Finance Committee was on in early July. Chairman Max Baucus signaled that he was prepared to give up much in order to hang on to a few GOP votes. Moderate Democrats were also skittish, making it easier for Baucus to trade away a public health insurance option. In addition, he was covering a third of the bill's $1 trillion cost by taxing employer-sponsored insurance, a change vigorously opposed by unions, whose members are 50 percent more likely than workers in nonunionized shops to get health benefits.

With the Senate leadership wavering, advocacy groups played bad cop to enforce party unity. The netroots organization Change Congress went after Nebraska Senator Ben Nelson online and in direct mail, alleging that he was swayed against the public option by the $2 million he received in campaign contributions from insurers. He recanted. North Carolina's Senator Kay Hagan signed on to the public option—albeit the fairly weak version endorsed by the health committee on July 15—when threatened with a similar campaign. Unions had begun broadcasting ads back in May opposing a tax on benefits. By mid-July, Senate majority leader Harry Reid reportedly told Baucus to back off these concessions because he would lose as many as fifteen Democratic votes; the Finance Committee went back to the drawing board.

But if this activism has won some victories in the Senate, some party leaders—including President Obama—have suggested they may regard it as counterproductive. "We shouldn't be focusing resources on each other," Obama said during a conference call with Congressional leaders, according to the *Washington Post*. "We ought to be focused on winning this debate."

But what does "win this debate" mean? I asked University of North Carolina political scientist Jonathan Oberlander, author of *The Political Life of Medicare*, to grade those involved in healthcare reform on how well they are doing to get a progressive bill, one that covers everyone and includes a public health insurance option.

Oberlander gave the White House high marks simply for creating a framework for negotiations that kept interest groups at the table and carried the process well beyond what any other administration had accomplished. While Baucus got low marks for overflexibility, he earned an A for effort—he'd kept healthcare reform at the top of the Finance Committee's agenda for months and continued to push through difficult negotiations.

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But the two entities that received the highest scores were the House and the advocacy groups, who have laid an impressive foundation to pull the debate leftward. The three House committee chairmen worked together with "extraordinary unity" to propose a single bill in order to "put down a liberal marker" for a reform proposal, says Oberlander. Their bill, released July 14, includes a strong public option tied to Medicare. (The version included in the Senate health committee's bill, in contrast, does not guarantee it will have the market muscle needed to actually help control costs, though it is valuable for upcoming negotiations.) They are well poised to hold on to the public plan in negotiations with the Senate because the eighty-member Progressive Caucus has pledged to withhold a majority of its votes from a compromise bill that drops such a provision.

Many in Washington are surprised that the public option is still on the table—even many healthcare reform advocates aligned with the Democrats privately regarded it from the beginning as a bargaining chip to be traded away for more obtainable objectives. Oberlander credits the advocacy groups for making it a viable option. "I think they have done a wonderful job over the past two years of putting the public plan option on the table. Without [the reform coalition] Health Care for America Now and the labor unions, I don't think it would have a chance."

Still, a deal on the public option remains elusive for the Senate Finance Committee. Perhaps their even bigger problem is the roughly $350 billion shortfall left when Democratic leaders nixed the finance mechanism acceptable to Republicans, a tax on health benefits. (Many progressive economists also favor this as part of comprehensive reform, since those on the top half of the income ladder get three-quarters of this tax break's value.)

Some Senate Democrats have already pronounced the House's planned surtax on the income of those earning more than $280,000 dead on arrival. As it seems increasingly unlikely that Senate leaders will be able to secure any Republican votes, House moderates are worried that supporting their chamber's progressive bill will make them vulnerable. House Blue Dogs bared their teeth July 9 in a letter to Speaker Nancy Pelosi, threatening to withhold their votes if the bill is not deficit neutral and the structure of the public plan is not weakened. Twenty-nine members of the New Democrat Coalition, another moderate caucus, sent a similar note days later. A group of nineteen conservative Democrats had already lobbed a bomb into the process by demanding in June that health plans not be required to cover abortion.

These Senate stumbles and House hiccups, however, are less worrisome because they come far later in the process than anyone expected. The Democratic leaders appear to have learned how to make their fractious coalition work together, though their hardest work is still ahead. That augurs well not only for healthcare reform but also for the many other difficult issues on the progressive agenda.

J. LESTER FEDER

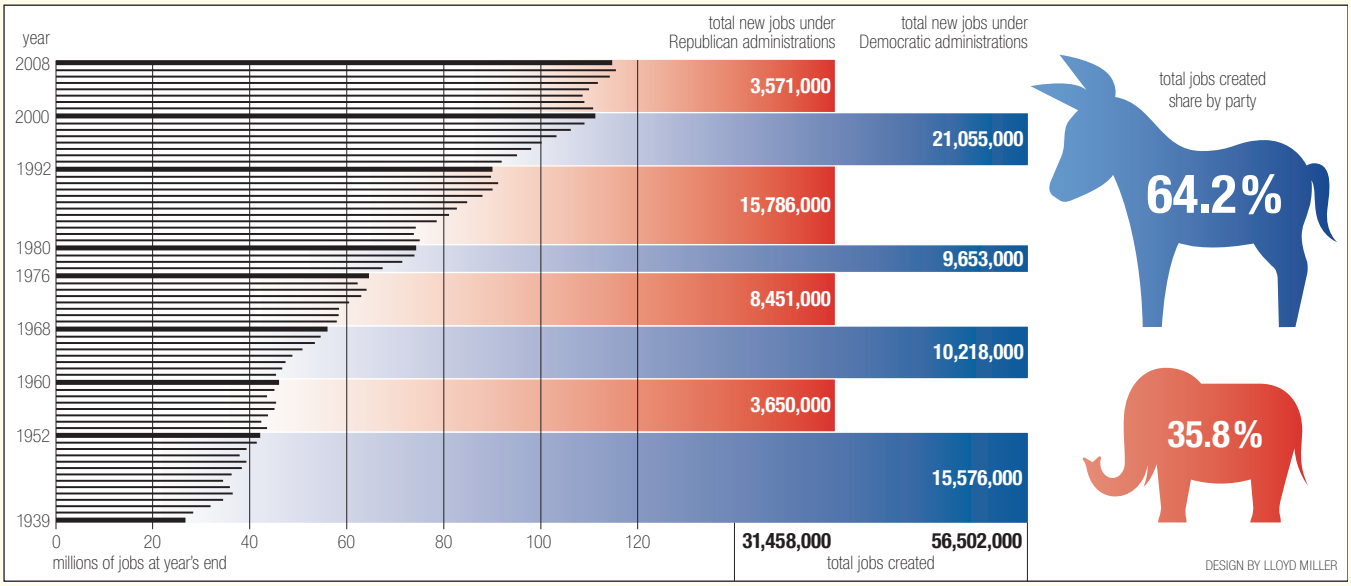
J. Lester Feder, a freelance journalist based in Washington, DC, covers politics, faith and popular culture, and is a regular contributor to Columbia Journalism Review*'s Campaign Desk.*

BY THE NUMBERS

Since 1940, Republicans have controlled the White House for thirty-six years; Democrats for thirty-three. Yet Bureau of Labor Statistics data show that almost two-thirds of new jobs were created during Democratic administrations. What about the years since Reagan was elected, promising prosperity through lower taxes, balanced budgets and less regulation? The Clinton years resulted in 21 million jobs, more than two decades of Reagan, Bush I and Bush II. One last detail: these numbers reflect only private-sector jobs; including the public sector would widen the gap in the Democrats' favor.

DAVID CAY JOHNSTON

David Cay Johnston, who received a Pulitzer Prize for his coverage of taxes, is a columnist for Tax Notes *and the author of* Free Lunch.



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Ten Things.

Ten Things You Need to Know to Live on the Streets

For millions of Americans, the housing crisis began well before last year's front-page collapse. Bigotry and criminalization by an unjust system of policing and incarceration, combined with economic privation, have kept even the meager privilege of a subprime mortgage or slumlord lease out of reach for many. As the crisis unfolds, the number of homeless will grow.

Picture the Homeless (picturethehomeless.org), a social justice organization founded and led by homeless people in New York City, has joined *The Nation* to come up with a list of things you need to know to live on the street—and ways we can all build movements to challenge the stigma of homelessness and put forward an alternative vision of community.

1 Be prepared to be blamed for your circumstances, no matter how much they may be beyond your control. Think of ways to disabuse the public of common misconceptions. Don't internalize cruelty or condescension. Let go of your pride—but hold on to your dignity.

2 There is no private space to which you may retreat. You are on display 24/7. Learn to travel light. Store valuables in a safe place, only carrying around what you really need: ID and documents for accessing services, a pen, etc. You can check e-mail and read at the library. You can get a post office box for a fee (usps.com/receive/businesssolutions/poboxservice.htm) or use general delivery (free).

3 Learn the best bathroom options, where you won't be rushed, turned away or harassed. Find restrooms where it's clean enough to put your stuff down, the stalls are big enough to change in and there's hot water so you can wash up. If you're in New York City go to nyrestroom.com.

4 It's difficult to have much control over when, where and what you eat, so learn soup kitchen schedules and menus. Carry with you nuts, peanut butter or other foods high in protein. Go to 4homeless.hypermart.net/soup_kitchens.html to find a list of soup kitchens by state.

5 Food and clothing are easier to find than a safe place to sleep—the first truth of homelessness is sleep deprivation. Always have a blanket. Whenever possible, sleep in groups with staggered schedules, so you can look out for one another, prioritizing children's needs over those of adults.

6 Know your rights! Knowing constitutional amendments, legal precedents and human rights provisions can help you, even if they're routinely violated. In New York, for example, a 2003 court-ordered settlement (nyclu.org/node/1164) strictly forbids selective enforcement of the law against the homeless. The Malcolm X Grassroots Movement offers another resource (mxgm.org), and the ACLU has cards, brochures, fact sheets and films (aclu.org).

7 Learn police patterns and practices. Be polite and calm to cops, even when they don't give the same respect. Support initiatives demanding independent police accountability. Link with groups from overlapping populations of nonhomeless and homeless people (i.e., black, Latino, LGBT groups) that are fighting police brutality and building nonpolice safety projects, like the Audre Lorde Project's Safe OUTside the System in Brooklyn (alp.org/whatwedo/organizing/sos). Organize your own CopWatch—and photograph, videotape and publicize instances of police abuse.

8 The First Amendment protects your right to solicit aid (panhandling), especially if your pitch or sign is a statement rather than a request. To succeed, be creative, funny, engaging ("I didn't get a bailout!"). Find good, high-traffic spots where the police won't bother you.

9 Housing is a human right! Squat. Forge coalitions with nonhomeless but potentially displaced people in this era of mass foreclosures. Support United Workers in Baltimore (unitedworkers.org), the Coalition on Homelessness in San Francisco (cohsf.org), the Nashville Homeless Power Project (homelesspower.org). Learn about campaigns against homelessness in other nations, including the Landless Workers' Movement in Brazil (mstbrazil.org) and the Anti-Eviction Campaign in South Africa (thenation.com/doc/20090420/western_cape).

10 Don't go it alone! Always be part of an informal network of trust and mutual aid. Start your own organization, with homeless people themselves shaping the fight for a better life and world.

CONCEIVED BY WALTER MOSLEY with research by Rae Gomes

"Ten Things" is a monthly feature. Readers who wish to propose ideas for it should e-mail NationTenThings@gmail.com.

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Alexander Cockburn

'Let Me Be Clear'

"Let me be clear," says Obama, and, as with George Bush's rapid eye movements when he was telling a lie, you know the forty-fourth president is on the brink of some absurdity.

"Now let me be clear," he told the Russians on his recent trip. "America will not seek to impose any system of government on any other country, nor would we presume to choose which party or individual should run a country.... America will never impose a security arrangement on another country."

And they sneer at Sarah Palin for her rhetorical absurdities? More from Obama in Moscow, as he presses forward with the Clinton/Bush policy of NATO expansion, ringing Russia with missile bases: "And let me be clear: NATO seeks collaboration with Russia, not confrontation." The last guy in the White House to be that clear was Nixon, who tossed in "perfectly" as a bonus.

It was even worse in Ghana, where Obama used his podium to lecture the whole of Africa on the correct moral and political path to a better future. Of course, this was really aimed at those same folks back home who thrilled to Obama's strictures on the campaign trail, using Father's Day a year ago to tell black dads—only black dads—to shape up.

"Africa's future is up to Africans," he said in Accra. For an educated man in the twenty-first century, not to mention one with some knowledge of Africa's history, that's easily as ludicrous as Palin's supposed ignorance of Africa's status as a continent. (I say "supposed" because that Palin blooper turned out to be a hoax.) Africa's future is to a pervasive extent up to the World Bank, the IMF, international mining and oil companies, the US Congress (which, for example, gives cotton subsidies to domestic corporate farmers, duly savaging the cotton economies of Burkina Faso, Benin, Mali and Chad).

Was it Africans who forced privatizations in Zambia beginning in the late 1990s, in which 257 of 280 businesses left the public sector? A fine piece in *Le Monde diplomatique* by Jean-Christophe Servant (available at counterpunch.org) describes how nearly 100,000 lost their jobs. Servant cites a report on the privatization by John Lungu and Alastair Frazer, which establishes that the sale "was orchestrated by the International Financial Institutions (IFIs)—including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.... ZCCM's privatization was carried out with a complete lack of transparency, no debate in parliament, and with one-sided contracts which few of us have ever seen.... It has never profited the inhabitants of the Copperbelt. Nor its environment." Servant also cites Edith Nawakwi, Zambia's former finance minister, who oversaw the privatizations. She recalls, "We were told by advisers, who included the IMF and the World Bank, that...if we privatized, we would be able to access debt relief, and this was a huge carrot in front of us—like waving medicine in front of a dying woman. We had no option." The "reforms" devastated Zambia.

"With better governance," Obama proclaimed in Accra, "I have no doubt that Africa holds the promise of a broader base of prosperity.... The continent is rich in natural resources. And from cellphone entrepreneurs to small farmers, Africans have shown the capacity and commitment to create their own opportunities." Yes, Africa is rich in resources, including coltan, essential for military and civil applications such as capacitors for cellphones like the BlackBerry Obama carries around. Eighty percent of the world's coltan reserves are found in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The race for coltan has put international companies like US-based Cabot Corp and OM Group, and Germany's HC Starck, at the terminus of a hugely profitable extractive process in which mercenary armies supervise the mining, with presidents and ministers bribed and thousands of people slaughtered.

"No business," Obama told Africans, "wants to invest in a place where the government skims 20 percent off the top...or the head of the port authority is corrupt. No person wants to live in a society where the rule of law gives way to the rule of brutality and bribery. That is not democracy, that is tyranny, even if occasionally you sprinkle an election in there. And now is the time for that style of governance to end."

Wrong, wrong, wrong. Precisely the welcoming climate that business—meaning big US and transnational corporations like Exxon, Shell-BP and mining companies—requires is a compliant host government to sign over the concessions (and be rewarded with the 20 percent skim) and corrupt officials to transmit the necessary bribes, thus providing the all-important fig leaf protecting companies from prosecution under the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act of 1977. The last thing these businesses want is the "rule of law" or "democracy," in any vital version of these terms.

Amid his endless homages to clarity and blunt speech, and to the proper assumption of "responsibility," Obama flees clarity whenever it involves unpleasant shouldering of responsibility by the US government, whether in the guise of international corporations, multilateral institutions under US control, agencies like USAID and the National Endowment for Democracy, and/or US armed forces operating overtly and covertly around the world.

Obama flees responsibility also, as do his die-hard liberal-progressive fans, including columnists like Maureen Dowd and Frank Rich, so implacable against tyranny and war in the Bush years. Has either of them deigned to mention Obama's continuation of Bush's policies on enemy combatants, eavesdropping or war? In three out of twenty-four columns from Rich since January 20; in one out of forty-three from Dowd. In the nick of time, along comes Palin to announce her resignation as Alaska's governor, duly eliciting a savage column from the courageous Rich; no fewer than three back to back from Dowd. Anything to change the subject from Wall Street's sermonizing serf in the White House. Thank you, Sarah! ■

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Katha Pollitt

Can This Marriage Be Saved?

Caitlin Flanagan—professional antifeminist, author of a whole book of essays attacking working mothers, herself excepted—is probably the only person in the world who could make me feel sorrier for Governor Mark Sanford than I already do. "Watching the governor of South Carolina cry like a little girl," she kicks off her *Time* cover story on divorce, "made me wonder whether the real secret to a lasting marriage lies in limiting your means of escape." Trust Flanagan to use misogyny even when attacking a man. "Unfaithfully Yours" ("Infidelity is eroding our most sacred institution. How to make marriage matter again") adds nothing to the familiar conservative lament about the "decline" of marriage: divorce and single motherhood ruin kids; sexual irresponsibility, bad enough in the upper class, has destroyed "the underclass"; and why can't men (all her adulterers are men) stay faithfully married for fifty years, like her father? Flanagan is so moralistic and self-congratulatory—she's married, yay!—I felt tempted to hike the Appalachian Trail myself, and I've only been married for three years.

It's not hard to poke holes in Flanagan's predictions of universal doom for the children of divorced or never-married parents. After all, President Clinton and President Obama turned out all right. Most children of divorce do. There are plenty of countries where divorce and unmarried parenthood are common, but children do fine—Sweden, France, Germany, the Netherlands. Some of the measured bad effects on kids are more about the way we divorce than the divorce itself—unstable living arrangements, disappearance of the father into a new family, moves and changes of school, new parental partners who don't stick around, loss of income, less attention from a mother who is now working all the time. It may be ideal for kids to grow up in a loving, sane, happy, stable, two-parent home, but that is not the alternative for couples contemplating divorce, still less for most never-married single mothers. And is infidelity the big cause of divorce? According to studies, almost three-quarters of couples stay together after a partner strays (Eliot and Silda, Bill and Hill, meet the Vitters, the Ensigns, the Patersons and the Craigs). Even the redoubtable Jenny Sanford has not completely given up on her Mark. Yet.

We could bash divorce forever, but what's the point? Even Jesus can't keep unhappy spouses together—the Bible Belt has much higher divorce rates than the comparatively secular Northeast—so it's no surprise Flanagan can't deliver on the promise to "make marriage matter again"; all she can do is wag a self-righteous finger at those who tread the primrose path. Like they care! In *The Atlantic*, Sandra Tsing Loh's piece on her divorce lays out, hilariously and poignantly, exactly why another round of "working on" your marriage can feel like one multi-task too many.

What if we tackled divorce from the other end: the world we actually live in. Let's assume, for example, that most people are not going to be more straitlaced, buttoned-down and self-denying than they are today. And let's admit that you can't make people behave as if they have no choice when, in fact, they do. There is no constituency for making divorce harder to get legally—as family values entrepreneur David Blankenhorn discovered when he tried to bring back fault divorce and to promote "covenant marriage" for couples who wanted to deny themselves the no-fault option. And it's not going to be more stigmatized socially either. Marriage-promotion schemes like welfare reform and abstinence-only sex ed have caused much misery but have not lowered the number of nonmarital births, which last year approached 40 percent of all births. So why not acknowledge that, of the many things we'd like children to have, two lifelong married parents are beyond our capacity as a society to provide?

If the concern is really with children, especially poor children, we could improve their lives tremendously by concentrating on the things we actually can achieve. Healthcare. Excellent schools with music and drama and art and gym and after-school programs. Neighborhoods safe enough for kids to play outdoors and air clean enough so they don't get asthma. Libraries. Summer camp. Counseling for kids in trouble—and their parents. Economic support for families, married or not. Housing for all. Free college. A public works job for anyone who wants one. All those necessities that, in America, are seen as the responsibility of individual families.

Have you noticed that conservatives express concern for low-income and especially black people—"the underclass"—only when they want to attack liberals? (This is a specialty of Flanagan's—the only time she writes about cleaning women is when she is blaming feminists for paying them too little; the only time she shows sympathy for women in prison is when she's casting scorn on the special parole deal granted ex-SLA member Kathleen Soliah.) But the attack on divorce isn't really about poor people and their families. It's about reinforcing the idea that "the family" is not just a haven in a heartless world but the only safety net you have, or should have, from the blows of fortune.

To fulfill people's needs with our collective talents, knowledge, energy and tax dollars? Why, that would be socialism!

* * *

In "Dr. George Tiller, 1941–2009" (June 29) I criticized President Obama's choice of Alexia Kelley, co-founder of Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good, to head the Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships in the Department of Health and Human Services. While it is true that Kelley's organization takes the Catholic Church's line on abortion and birth control, I was mistaken when I wrote that she would decide what groups get $20 million in grants for reproductive health projects. In fact, while Kelley will help organizations apply for the funds, she will not make the grants. ■

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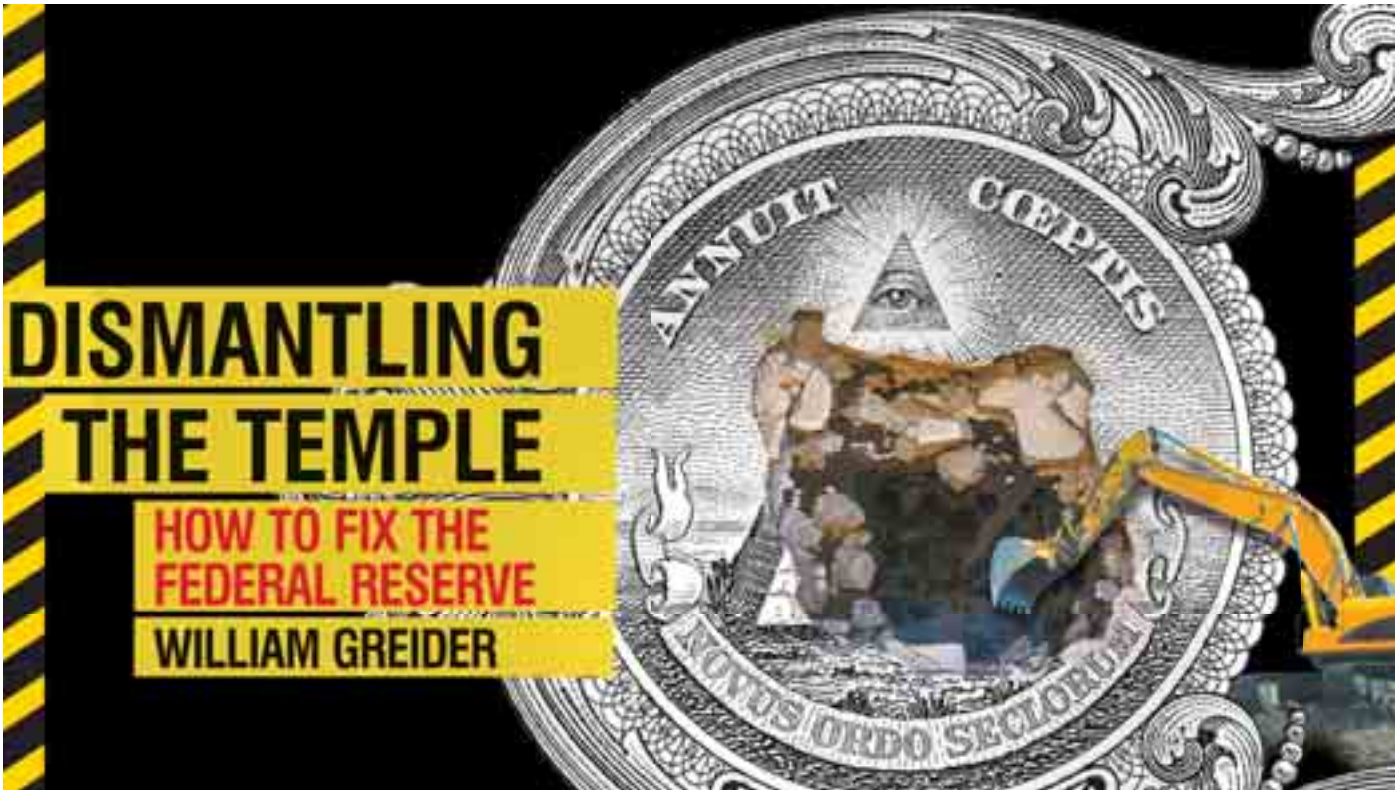

The financial crisis has propelled the Federal Reserve into an excruciating political dilemma. The Fed is at the zenith of its influence, using its extraordinary powers to rescue the economy. Yet the extreme irregularity of its behavior is producing a legitimacy crisis for the central bank. The remote technocrats at the Fed who decide money and credit policy for the nation are deliberately opaque and little understood by most Americans. For the first time in generations, they are now threatened with popular rebellion.

During the past year, the Fed has flooded the streets with money—distributing trillions of dollars to banks, financial markets and commercial interests—in an attempt to revive the credit system and get the economy growing again. As a result, the awesome authority of this cloistered institution is visible to many ordinary Americans for the first time. People and politicians are shocked and confused, and also angered, by what they see. They are beginning to ask some hard questions for which Federal Reserve governors do not have satisfactory answers.

Where did the central bank get all the money it is handing out? Basically, the Fed printed it, out of thin air. That is what central banks do. Who told the Fed governors they could do this? Nobody, really—not Congress or the president. The Federal Reserve Board, alone among government agencies, does not submit its budgets to Congress for authorization and appropriation. It raises its own money, sets its own priorities.

Representative Wright Patman, the Texas populist who was a scourge of central bankers, once described the Federal Reserve as "a pretty queer duck." Congress created the Fed in 1913 with the presumption that it would be "independent" from the rest of government, aloof from regular politics and deliberately shielded from the hot breath of voters or the grasping appetites of private interests—with one powerful exception: the bankers.

The Fed was designed as a unique hybrid in which government would share its powers with the private banking industry. Bankers collaborate closely on Fed policy. Banks are the "shareholders" who ostensibly own the twelve regional Federal Reserve banks. Bankers sit on the boards of directors, proposing interest-rate changes for Fed governors in Washington to decide. Bankers also have a special advisory council that meets privately with governors to critique monetary policy and management of the economy. Sometimes, the Fed pretends to be a private organization. Other times, it admits to being part of the government.

The antiquated quality of this institution is reflected in the map of the Fed's twelve regional banks. Five of them are located in the Midwest (better known today as the industrial Rust Belt). Missouri has two Federal Reserve banks (St. Louis and Kansas City), while the entire West Coast has only one (located in San Francisco, not Los Angeles or Seattle). Virginia has one; Florida does not. Among its functions, the Federal Reserve directly regulates the largest banks, but it also looks out for their well-being—providing regular liquidity loans for those caught short and bailing out endangered banks it deems "too big to fail." Critics look askance at these peculiar arrangements and see "conspiracy." But it's not really secret. This duck was created by an act of Congress. The Fed's favoritism toward bankers is embedded in its DNA.

This awkward reality explains the dilemma facing the Fed. It cannot stand too much visibility, nor can it easily explain or justify its peculiar status. The Federal Reserve is the black hole of our democracy—the crucial contradiction that keeps the people and their representatives from having any voice in these most important public policies. That's why the central bankers have always operated in secrecy, avoiding public controversy and in-

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Mario Cuomo is a longstanding Nation reader.

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evitable accusations of special deal-making. The current crisis has blown the central bank's cover. Many in Congress are alarmed, demanding greater transparency. More than 250 House members are seeking an independent audit of Fed accounts. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi observed that the Fed seems to be poaching on Congressional functions—handing out public money without the bother of public decision-making.

"Many of us were…if not surprised, taken aback, when the Fed had $80 billion to invest in AIG just out of the blue," Pelosi said. "All of a sudden, we wake up one morning and AIG was receiving $80 billion from the Fed. So of course we're saying, Where is this money coming from? 'Oh, we have it. And not only that, we have more.'" So who needs Congress? Pelosi sounded guileless, but she knows very well where the Fed gets its money. She was slyly tweaking the central bankers on their vulnerability.

Fed chair Ben Bernanke responded with the usual aloofness. An audit, he insisted, would amount to "a takeover of monetary policy by the Congress." He did not appear to recognize how arrogant that sounded. Congress created the Fed, but it must not look too deeply into the Fed's private business. The mystique intimidates many politicians. The Fed's power depends crucially upon the people not knowing exactly what it does.

Basically, what the central bank is trying to do with its aggressive distribution of trillions is avoid repeating the great mistake the Fed made after the 1929 stock market crash. The central bankers responded hesitantly then and allowed the money supply to collapse, which led to the ultimate catastrophe of full-blown monetary deflation and created the Great Depression. Bernanke has not yet won this struggle against falling prices and production—deflationary symptoms remain visible around the world—but he has not lost either. He might get more public sympathy if Fed officials explained this dilemma in plain English. Instead, they are shielding people from understanding the full dimensions of our predicament.

President Obama inadvertently made the political problem worse for the Fed in June, when he proposed to make the central bank the supercop to guard against "systemic risk" and decide the terms for regulating the largest commercial banks and some heavyweight industrial corporations engaged in finance. The House Financial Services Committee intends to draft the legislation quickly, but many members want to learn more first. Obama's proposal gives the central bank even greater power, including broad power to pick winners and losers in the private economy and behind closed doors. Yet Obama did not propose any changes in the Fed's privileged status. Instead, he asked Fed governors to consider the matter. But perhaps it is the Federal Reserve that needs to be reformed.

A few months back, I ran into a retired Fed official who had been a good source twenty years ago when I was writing my book about the central bank, *Secrets of the Temple: How the Federal Reserve Runs the Country*. He is a Fed loyalist and did not leak damaging secrets. But he helped me understand how the supposedly nonpolitical Fed does its politics, behind the veil of disinterested expertise. When we met recently, he said the central bank is already making preparations to celebrate its approaching centennial. Some of us, I responded, have a different idea for 2013.

"We think that would be a good time to dismantle the

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temple," I playfully told my old friend. "Democratize the Fed. Or tear it down. Create something new in its place that's accountable to the public."

The Fed man did not react well to my teasing. He got a stricken look. His voice tightened. Please, he pleaded, do not go down that road. The Fed has made mistakes, he agreed, but the country needs its central bank. His nervous reaction told me this venerable institution is feeling insecure about its future.

Six reasons why granting the Fed even more power is a really bad idea:

1. It would reward failure. Like the largest banks that have been bailed out, the Fed was a co-author of the destruction. During the past twenty-five years, it failed to protect the country against reckless banking and finance adventures. It also failed in its most basic function—moderating the expansion of credit to keep it in balance with economic growth. The Fed instead allowed, even encouraged, the explosion of debt and inflation of financial assets that have now collapsed. The central bank was derelict in enforcing regulations and led cheers for dismantling them. Above all, the Fed did not see this disaster coming, or so it claims. It certainly did nothing to warn people.

2. Cumulatively, Fed policy was a central force in destabilizing the US economy. Its extreme swings in monetary policy, combined with utter disregard for timely regulatory enforcement, steadily shifted economic rewards away from the real economy of production, work and wages and toward the financial realm, where profits and incomes were wildly inflated by false valuations. Abandoning its role as neutral arbitrator, the Fed tilted in favor of capital over labor. The institution was remolded to conform with the right-wing market doctrine of chairman Alan Greenspan, and it was blinded to reality by his ideology (see my *Nation* article "The One-Eyed Chairman," September 19, 2005).

3. The Fed cannot possibly examine "systemic risk" objectively because it helped to create the very structural flaws that led to breakdown. The Fed served as midwife to Citigroup, the failed conglomerate now on government life support. Greenspan unilaterally authorized this new financial/banking combine in the 1990s—even before Congress had repealed the Glass-Steagall Act, which prohibited such mergers. Now the Fed keeps Citigroup alive with a $300 billion loan guarantee. The central bank, in other words, is deeply invested in protecting the banking behemoths that it promoted, if only to cover its own mistakes.

4. The Fed can't be trusted to defend the public in its private deal-making with bank executives. The numerous revelations of collusion have shocked the public, and more scandals are certain if Congress conducts a thorough investigation. When Treasury Secretary Timothy Geithner was president of the New York Fed, he supervised the demise of Bear Stearns with a sweet deal for JPMorgan Chase, which took over the failed brokerage—$30 billion to cover any losses. Geithner was negotiating with Morgan Chase CEO and New York Fed board member Jamie Dimon. Goldman Sachs CEO Lloyd Blankfein got similar solicitude when the Fed bailed out insurance giant AIG, a Goldman counterparty: a side-door payout of $13 billion. The new president at the New York Fed, William Dudley, is another Goldman man.

5. Instead of disowning the notorious policy of "too big to fail," the Fed will be bound to embrace the doctrine more explicitly as "systemic risk" regulator. A new superclass of forty or fifty financial giants will emerge as the born-again "money trust" that citizens railed against 100 years ago. But this time, it will be armed with a permanent line of credit from Washington. The Fed, having restored and consolidated the battered Wall Street club, will doubtless also shield a few of the largest industrial-financial corporations, like General Electric (whose CEO also sits on the New York Fed board). Whatever officials may claim, financial-market investors will understand that these mammoth institutions are insured against failure. Everyone else gets to experience capitalism in the raw.

6. This road leads to the corporate state—a fusion of private and public power, a privileged club that dominates everything else from the top down. This will likely foster even greater concentration of financial power, since any large company left out of the protected class will want to join by growing larger and acquiring the banking elements needed to qualify. Most enterprises in banking and commerce will compete with the big boys at greater disadvantage, vulnerable to predatory power plays the Fed has implicitly blessed.

The Federal Reserve Board is the only government agency that does not submit its budgets to Congress for authorization and appropriation.

Whatever good intentions the central bank enunciates, it will be deeply conflicted in its actions, always pulled in opposite directions. If the Fed tries to curb the growth of the megabanks or prohibit their reckless practices, it will be accused of damaging profitability and thus threatening the stability of the system. If it allows overconfident bankers to wander again into dangerous territory, it will be blamed for creating the mess and stuck with cleaning it up. Obama's reform might prevail in the short run. The biggest banks, after all, will be lobbying alongside him in favor of the Fed, and Congress may not have the backbone to resist. The Fed, however, is sure to remain in the cross hairs. Too many different interests will be damaged—thousands of smaller banks, all the companies left out of the club, organized labor, consumers and other sectors, not to mention libertarian conservatives like Texas Representative Ron Paul. They will recognize that the "money trust" once again has its boot on their neck, and that this time the government arranged it.

The obstacles to democratizing the Fed are obviously formidable. Tampering with the temple is politically taboo. But this crisis has demonstrated that the present arrangement no longer works for the public interest. The society of 1913 no longer exists, nor does the New Deal economic order that carried us to twentieth-century prosperity. The country thus has a rare opportunity to reconstitute the Federal

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Reserve as a normal government agency, shorn of the bankers' preferential trappings and the fallacious claim to "independent" status as well as the claustrophobic demand for secrecy.

Progressives in the early twentieth century, drawn from the growing ranks of managerial professionals, believed "good government" required technocratic experts who would be shielded from the unruly populace and especially from radical voices of organized labor, populism, socialism and other upstart movements. The pretensions of "scientific" decision-making by remote governing elites—both the mysterious wisdom of central bankers and the inventive wizardry of financial titans—failed spectacularly in our current catastrophe. The Fed was never independent in any real sense. Its power depended on taking care of its one true constituency in banking and finance.

A reconstituted central bank might keep the famous name and presidentially appointed governors, confirmed by Congress, but it would forfeit the mystique and submit to the usual standards of transparency and public scrutiny. The institution would be directed to concentrate on the Fed's one great purpose—making monetary policy and controlling credit expansion to produce balanced economic growth and stable money. Most regulatory functions would be located elsewhere, in a new enforcement agency that would oversee regulated commercial banks as well as the "shadow banking" of hedge funds, private equity firms and others.

A reconstituted Fed would submit to the usual standards of public scrutiny and allow Congress to reclaim its power to set monetary policy.

The Fed would thus be relieved of its conflicted objectives. Bank examiners would be free of the insider pressures that inevitably emanate from the Fed's cozy relations with major banks. All of the private-public ambiguities concocted in 1913 would be swept away, including bank ownership of the twelve Federal Reserve banks, which could be reorganized as branch offices with a focus on regional economies.

Altering the central bank would also give Congress an opening to reclaim its primacy in this most important matter. That sounds farfetched to modern sensibilities, and traditionalists will scream that it is a recipe for inflationary disaster. But this is what the Constitution prescribes: "The Congress shall have the power to coin money [and] regulate the value thereof." It does not grant the president or the treasury secretary this power. Nor does it envision a secretive central bank that interacts murkily with the executive branch.

Given Congress's weakened condition and its weak grasp of the complexities of monetary policy, these changes cannot take place overnight. But the gradual realignment of power can start with Congress and an internal reorganization aimed at building its expertise and educating members on how to develop a critical perspective. Congress has already created models for how to do this. The Congressional Budget Office is a respected authority on fiscal policy, reliably nonpartisan. Congress needs to create something similar for monetary policy.

Instead of consigning monetary policy to backwater subcommittees, each chamber should create a major new committee to supervise money and credit, limited in size to members willing to concentrate on becoming responsible stewards for the long run. The monetary committees, working in tandem with the Fed's board of governors, would occasionally recommend (and sometimes command) new policy directions at the federal agency and also review its spending.

Setting monetary policy is a very different process from enacting laws. The Fed operates through a continuum of decisions and rolling adjustments spread over months, even years. Congress would have to learn how to respond to deeper economic conditions that may not become clear until after the next election. The education could help the institution mature.

Congress also needs a "council of public elders"—a rotating board of outside advisers drawn from diverse interests and empowered to speak their minds in public. They could second-guess the makers of monetary policy but also Congress. These might include retired pols, labor leaders, academics and state governors—preferably people whose thinking is no longer defined by party politics or personal ambitions. The public could nominate representatives too. No financial wizards need apply.

A revived Congress armed with this kind of experience would be better equipped to enact substantive law rather than simply turning problems over to regulatory agencies with hollow laws that are merely hortatory suggestions. Reordering the financial system and the economy will require hard rules—classic laws of "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not" that command different behavior from certain private interests and prohibit what has proved reckless and destructive. If "too big to fail" is the problem, don't leave it to private negotiations between banks and the Federal Reserve. Restore anti-monopoly laws and make big banks get smaller. If the financial system's risky innovations are too complicated for bank examiners to understand, then those innovations should probably be illegal.

Many in Congress will be afraid to take on the temple and reluctant to violate the taboo surrounding the Fed. It will probably require popular rebellion to make this happen, and that requires citizens who see through the temple's secrets. But the present crisis has not only exposed the Fed's worst failures and structural flaws; it has also introduced citizens to the vast potential of monetary policy to serve the common good. If Ben Bernanke can create trillions of dollars at will and spread them around the financial system, could government do the same thing to finance important public projects the people want and need? Daring as it sounds, the answer is, Yes, we can.

The central bank's most mysterious power—to create money with a few computer keystrokes—is dauntingly complicated, and the mechanics are not widely understood. But the essential thing to understand is that this power relies on democratic consent—the people's trust, their willingness to accept the currency and use it in exchange. This is not entirely voluntary, since the

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government also requires people to pay their taxes in dollars, not euros or yen. But citizens conferred the power on government through their elected representatives. Newly created money is often called the "pure credit" of the nation. In principle, it exists for the benefit of all.

In this emergency, Bernanke essentially used the Fed's money-creation power in a way that resembles the "greenbacks" Abraham Lincoln printed to fight the Civil War. Lincoln was faced with rising costs and shrinking revenues (because the Confederate states had left the Union). The president authorized issuance of a novel national currency—the "greenback"—that had no backing in gold reserves and therefore outraged orthodox thinking. But the greenbacks worked. The expanded money supply helped pay for war mobilization and kept the economy booming. In a sense, Lincoln won the war by relying on the "full faith and credit" of the people, much as Bernanke is printing money freely to fight off financial collapse and deflation.

If Congress chooses to take charge of its constitutional duty, it could similarly use greenback currency created by the Federal Reserve as a legitimate channel for financing important public projects—like sorely needed improvements to the nation's infrastructure. Obviously, this has to be done carefully and responsibly, limited to normal expansion of the money supply and used only for projects that truly benefit the entire nation (lest it lead to inflation). But here is an example of how it would work.

President Obama has announced the goal of building a high-speed rail system. Ours is the only advanced industrial society that doesn't have one (ride the modern trains in France or Japan to see what our society is missing). Trouble is, Obama has only budgeted a pittance ($8 billion) for this project. Spain, by comparison, has committed more than $100 billion to its fifteen-year railroad-building project. Given the vast shortcomings in US infrastructure, the country will never catch up with the backlog through the regular financing of taxing and borrowing.

Instead, Congress should create a stand-alone development fund for long-term capital investment projects (this would require the long-sought reform of the federal budget, which makes no distinction between current operating spending and long-term investment). The Fed would continue to create money only as needed by the economy; but instead of injecting this money into the banking system, a portion of it would go directly to the capital investment fund, earmarked by Congress for specific projects of great urgency. The idea of direct financing for infrastructure has been proposed periodically for many years by groups from right and left. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood co-sponsored legislation along these lines a decade ago when he was a Republican Congressman from Illinois.

This approach speaks to the contradiction House Speaker Pelosi pointed out when she asked why the Fed has limitless money to spend however it sees fit. Instead of borrowing the money to pay for the new rail system, the government financing would draw on the public's money-creation process—just as Lincoln did and Bernanke is now doing.

The bankers would howl, for good reason. They profit enormously from the present system and share in the money-creation process. When the Fed injects more reserves into the banking system, it automatically multiplies the banks' capacity to create money by increasing their lending (and banks, in turn, collect interest on their new loans). The direct-financing approach would not halt the banking industry's role in allocating new credit, since the newly created money would still wind up in the banks as deposits. But the government would now decide how to allocate new credit to preferred public projects rather than let private banks make all the decisions for us.

The reform of monetary policy, in other words, has promising possibilities for revitalizing democracy. Congress is a human institution and therefore fallible. Mistakes will be made, for sure. But we might ask ourselves, If Congress were empowered to manage monetary policy, could it do any worse than those experts who brought us to ruin? ■

So Far From God, So Close to Wall St.

Mexico's troubles illustrate the destructive effects of NAFTA's neoliberal economics.

by JEFF FAUX

This past winter both the outgoing director of the CIA and a separate Pentagon report declared political instability in Mexico to be on a par with Pakistan and Iran as top-ranking threats to US national security. It was an exaggeration; Mexico is not yet a "failed state." On the other hand, it is certainly drifting in that direction.

A vicious war among narco-trafficking cartels last year killed at least 6,000 people, including public officials, police and journalists. The country leads the world in kidnappings (Pakistan is second). And with the global crisis, the chronically anemic economy is hemorrhaging jobs, businesses and hope.

Not surprisingly, voters turned against President Felipe Calderón's right-wing National Action Party (PAN) in the July 5 midterm elections. But the left-wing Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD)—which many believe was robbed of the presidency in the 2006 election—has ripped itself apart with factional infighting. So frustrated Mexicans gave their Congress back to the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), whose decades of corrupt authoritarian rule were supposed to have permanently ended in 2000. At least, thought many voters, the PRI knows how to keep order.

Mexicans are of course responsible for their own country. But geography has always forced them to play out their history in the

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shadow of their northern neighbor. "Poor Mexico," goes the saying. "So far from God, so close to the United States." Today, Mexico is a prime example of the socially destructive effects of the neoliberal economics promoted throughout the world by the US governing class.

The North American Free Trade Agreement—proposed by Ronald Reagan, negotiated by George Bush I and pushed through Congress by Bill Clinton in 1993—is both symbol and substance of neoliberalism. It was sold to the citizens of the United States, Mexico and Canada with the promise that free trade in goods and money would transform Mexico into a booming middle-class economy, dramatically reducing illegal immigration and creating a vast market for US and, to a lesser extent, Canadian exports.

REUTERS/WIN MCNAMEE

President Clinton at a 1993 NAFTA signing ceremony, with Gerald Ford, House Speaker Tom Foley, Senate majority leader George Mitchell, Jimmy Carter, Senate minority leader Bob Dole, George H.W. Bush, House minority leader Robert Michel and Al Gore

Fifteen years later, Mexico is still unable to create enough jobs to employ its people. Out-migration has doubled, and on both sides of the US-Mexico border labor-market competition has kept wages down. At the top, income and wealth have ballooned. It is no accident that among NAFTA's prominent godfathers were former Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin (Democrat) and former Federal Reserve chair Alan Greenspan (Republican), whose fingerprints are all over the current global financial disaster.

I was an opponent of NAFTA. Still, I thought the best case for it was that efficiencies from economic integration could at least make US and Mexican businesses more internationally competitive. But even that argument turned out to be worth no more than a share of Bernie Madoff's hedge fund.

Several years ago I gave a speech to a group of businesspeople in Mexico City. Those from the multinational banks and corporations thought NAFTA was a great success, but smaller Mexican businessmen saw it differently. You Americans, said one, promised that with your technology and our cheap labor, we'd be partners in competing with Asia. Then you opened up your markets to China and invested there instead. "Sure," he said. "We can make TV parts for half what it costs in the United States. But the Chinese can make them, and ship them, for a tenth. So instead of closing the gap between Mexico and the United States by raising wages, we have to narrow the gap between Mexico and China by lowering them."

When I mentioned the conversation to a New York investment banker who had lobbied for NAFTA, he conceded that his side may have talked vaguely about partnership with Mexico. But he shrugged and added, "Things changed"—that is, profit opportunities in China dwarfed anything Mexico had to offer.

The Wall Streeters had little interest in making Mexico more competitive. They also had little interest in making the United States more competitive. Their purpose was just the opposite: to disconnect themselves and their corporate partners from the fate of any particular country. The World Trade Organization, the opening of the US market to China and a parade of bilateral trade agreements followed in NAFTA's wake.

In Mexico, the political and financial elite were willing collaborators. For example, NAFTA opened up Mexican banks to foreign ownership: political insiders who had bought the giant Banamex from the government for $3.2 billion and gotten the government to provide it with permanent subsidies then sold the firm, with the subsidies, to Citigroup for $12.5 billion. Today roughly 90 percent of the banking system is owned by US and other foreign investors, who do not have to recycle Mexicans' deposits, or the Mexican government's money, back into Mexico but can invest them anyplace in the world.

The Banamex deal was negotiated by Rubin after he became Citigroup's $17 million-a-year executive committee chair. In the late 1980s, when he was at Goldman Sachs, Rubin had midwifed the privatization of Mexico's phone system to Carlos Slim, a politically connected Mexican businessman. Slim then used the monopoly profits from his high phone rates to invest all over the globe—including a substantial ownership stake in the *New York Times*. The latest *Forbes* rating says he's the world's third-richest man.

Still, as long as the US economy was blowing dot-com and subprime bubbles, the neoliberal model seemed stable. US investors got Mexican bank deposits and cheaper labor on both sides of the border. Through out-migration to the States, Mexico's oligarchs got rid of frustrated workers who might otherwise have been politically troublesome. The economy also benefited from hard-currency remittances migrants sent back home.

Another infusion of cash to the Mexican economy, unacknowledged in the official statistics, is the roughly $25 billion in illegal drug exports to the States. Today, with remittances, oil prices and tourism depressed, the narco trade is probably Mexico's largest single earner of hard currency.

NAFTA and the neoliberal ideology it represents are certainly not the root causes of narco-trafficking. But they have been major factors in its recent monstrous growth. For starters, the trade agreement created a two-way overland superhighway for contraband; the Mexican drug lords use the dollars they have earned from their exports to import guns, aircraft and sophisti-

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Dr. Bart D. Ehrman (Ph.D., Princeton Theological Seminary) is the James A. Gray Professor and Chair of the Department of Religious Studies at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He has won several teaching awards, including the Bowman and Gordon Gray Award for Excellence in Teaching. Professor Ehrman has written or edited 17 books, including the recent bestseller *Misquoting Jesus.*

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cated military equipment from the United States to fight their territorial wars. By wiping out small Mexican farms that could not compete with heavily subsidized US agribusiness, NAFTA also expanded the pool of unemployed young people that provides the narco-traffickers with recruits. And banking integration under NAFTA made money laundering much easier.

Perhaps most important, NAFTA has helped maintain the corrupt network of Mexican oligarchs. The 1988 presidential election—which the then-ruling PRI had to steal from the PRD to win—shocked the establishment on both sides of the border. By opening up Mexico to US money and influence, NAFTA was a way, as the US Trade Representative said to me at the time, "to keep the Mexican left out of power."

Until the 1980s, Mexican drug (mostly marijuana) smuggling to the north was modest in scale and generally tolerated by successive PRI governments. Their message was: we don't care what you sell to the gringos, but no rough stuff here, keep it away from our kids and of course share a little of the profit under the table. But the US-backed neoliberals who took over the PRI in the 1980s had closer ties with the Mexican cartels. The brother and father of president and NAFTA champion Carlos Salinas—hailed in Washington as a good-government reformer—were widely accused of being connected to the drug business. In Salinas's first year in office his national police chief was found with $2.4 million in drug money in the trunk of his car.

In the 1990s, as the geographically better-positioned Mexican cartels muscled out the Colombians as chief cocaine retailers to the US market, their profits and political influence grew. But so did the rivalry among them and their allied government factions for control of trade routes. Bullet-riddled bodies began showing up on the streets, making the public nervous.

Seeking legitimacy after his 2006 election was tainted by charges of fraud, President Felipe Calderón declared war on the narco-traffickers. It was a popular gesture, but given that the police, the military and the legal system are heavily infiltrated by the gangs, it backfired. The narcos reacted with horrific violence—assassinations, beheadings and mutilations of police and soldiers as well as thugs, brazenly displayed on YouTube. Losing control, Calderón appealed to George Bush II for help. The result: the Mérida Initiative, a $400 million-per-year program to provide aircraft, military equipment and training to the Mexican police and military.

After decades of keeping its distance from the United States, the Mexican military—like the armed forces of Colombia, Honduras and other Latin American countries—is becoming a Pentagon client. In turn, Mexican society is itself becoming militarized. Corrupt local police are being replaced by soldiers who may be slightly less corrupt but who are a greater threat to human rights and democracy. An April Human Rights Watch report identified seventeen specific cases of abuse by the Mexican military, including "killings, torture, rapes, and arbitrary detentions."

To his credit, Barack Obama has acknowledged what his predecessors failed to: that the US demand for drugs and its supplying of arms makes it an enabler in the rise of narco warlords. But he has also made it clear that neither issue is on his administration's agenda. Moreover, just as Bill Clinton carried the water for George Bush I's NAFTA, Barack Obama has endorsed Bush II's Mérida Initiative.

Given the unwillingness of US politicians to deal with the demand side of the market, the Mérida Initiative is not likely to be any more successful in eradicating the drug trade than the $6 billion Plan Colombia has been. The best one can hope for is some sort of market-sharing deal among the cartels that would be implicitly endorsed by the Mexican government while Washington tactfully averts its eyes. Given that in many areas, drug money is the chief source of campaign financing, a PRI-dominated Mexican Congress might be just the right forum for a cynical, but welcome, end to the killings.

Meanwhile, the drug violence has frightened away tourists and investors, making Mexico's recession even worse. Most forecasters expect the economy to contract some 6 percent this year—a huge hit to a country in which 45 percent live on $2 a day or less. Calderón's response is to tread water—rescuing big businesses that speculated on Wall Street derivatives and dribbling out a bit more public spending—while waiting for the United States to once again suck up Mexico's surplus labor.

But even when the US economy recovers, it is unlikely to re-create the credit boom that kept the NAFTA deal afloat. In the post-crash era, the United States will finally be forced to address its trade deficits and its massive foreign debt. Americans will have to slow down consumer spending, increase savings and sell more to—and buy less from—the rest of the world. If Mexico could not prosper during fifteen years of exporting goods and people to a bloated US consumer market, it is hard to believe it will be able to do so when that market has slimmed down.

The entire relationship must be rethought. In this regard, Obama's abandonment of his campaign pledge to renegotiate NAFTA was a missed opportunity. A renewed debate over the trade deal could have spurred public discussion of the failure of neoliberal economics, the "war on drugs" and an immigration policy that ignores conditions in Mexico that drive people across the border. It could have been a forum to think through the question of how continental integration can work for working people rather than just investors. For example, what kind of cooperative transportation, energy and green industrial policies would make the people of three nations—now bound together in one market—globally competitive?

Obama's Wall Street advisers have no more interest in this sort of change than did Bush's. And without a new economic direction, life for the average Mexican will surely worsen and social tensions rise. Some Mexican friends point out that the revolution against Spain erupted in 1810 and the one against the US-backed dictator Porfirio Díaz in 1910. And in 2010… ?

In any event, Mexico's growing troubles will not stay conveniently on the other side of the Rio Grande. Build a ten-foot wall, and desperate people will find twelve-foot ladders. Free trade will, of course, continue to flourish; Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano estimates that Mexican drug cartels are now operating in 230 US cities.

So, thanks to the people who brought you the subprime mortgage disaster, the credit freeze and the Great Recession, the next Mexican revolution may come closer to home than you think. ■

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Obama's Faithful Flock

by SARAH POSNER

When President Barack Obama announced the appointment of Alexia Kelley, executive director of Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good (CACG), to lead the Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), many progressive activists were alarmed. Kelley, a Catholic social justice advocate who has said that abortion is a social ill to be combated along with torture, poverty and war, is on record supporting restrictions on abortion access and has refused to challenge church doctrine prohibiting abortion and birth control.

Writing in *Salon*, Frances Kissling, former president of Catholics for Choice, lauded Kelley as "a distinguished advocate of healthcare reform and the rights of poor people" who "has much to offer in government—but not at HHS." Jon O'Brien, current president of Catholics for Choice, stated publicly, "We need those working in HHS to rely on evidence-based methods to reduce the need for abortion…unfortunately, as seen from her work at CACG, Ms. Kelley does not fit the bill."

For progressives, secularists and feminists, Kelley's appointment is the latest in a series of alarming developments at the White House's Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships (OFBNP), which oversees a network of faith-based and neighborhood partnership centers at eleven federal agencies (including the one Kelley will head). During the presidential campaign, Obama said he would expand George W. Bush's faith-based initiatives because "the challenges we face today…are simply too big for government to solve alone." But he also promised to end the constitutional violations of Bush's faith-based programs by requiring that federal dollars that go to churches, temples and mosques "only be used on secular programs" and by forbidding programs that accept federal money from proselytizing or discriminating against people in hiring on the basis of religion.

Since he has taken office, however, Obama has backtracked or stalled on these pledges. Perhaps more disturbing, Obama's OFBNP, while still a work in progress, is plagued by a lack of transparency and accountability and has seemingly already been exploited as a tool for rewarding religious constituencies with government jobs—exactly the problems that marked Bush's faith-based initiative.

Indeed, the structure of Obama's OFBNP looks quite similar to Bush's: a White House office (now under the direction of 26-year-old Joshua DuBois, the former religious outreach director of the Obama campaign) guides the project overall. Mara Vanderslice, founder of the Matthew 25 PAC, which supported Obama, works with DuBois. In addition, the centers at federal

ZINA SAUNDERS

agencies oversee the disbursements of grants to faith-based and community nonprofits, some of which will, in turn, train faith-based organizations.

The Obama administration has said the project will not just dole out money; it also intends to form nonfinancial partnerships with faith-based and community groups to deliver social services. But the financial relationships remain. For example, although Obama's 2010 budget eliminated the Compassion Capital Fund, the pot of money administered to faith-based groups through HHS in the Bush era, $50 million has been authorized in the stimulus bill for a new Strengthening Communities Fund, which will be disbursed to nonprofits and state, city, county and tribal governments to train faith-based and other nonprofits to help "low-income individuals secure and retain employment, earn higher wages, obtain better-quality jobs and gain greater access to state and Federal benefits and tax credits."

Watchdogs are concerned that, as with Bush's fund, controls are insufficient to ensure constitutional protections, transparency or accountability. "These problems will persist until this administration stops operating under the Bush-era executive orders and regulations that still govern the faith-based programs," says Marge Baker, executive vice president of People for the American Way.

Within particular federal agencies, many other grants are available to faith-based organizations, which compete for fund-

Sarah Posner, a senior correspondent for The American Prospect, *is the author of* God's Profits: Faith, Fraud, and the Republican Crusade for Values Voters *(PoliPoint).*

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ing with secular organizations on the Bush-era "level playing field." At HHS, under Alexia Kelley's purview, tens of millions of dollars in grants are available to faith-based groups for projects including substance abuse treatment, mental health services, HIV prevention, family planning and even research on the influence of religiosity and spirituality on health-risk behaviors in children and adolescents. Although the Obama administration eliminated federal funding for abstinence-only sex education, the HHS website directs potential grantees to abstinence-only funding available through state governments.

At the Department of Housing and Urban Development, for example—where Obama has placed his campaign's Catholic outreach guru, Mark Linton, at the helm of the faith-based center—religious organizations are invited to apply for a variety of housing-related grants. At the Justice Department the faith-based office advertises grants available to faith-based groups to "provide assistance to victims of crime, prisoners and ex-offenders, and women who suffer domestic violence [and] initiatives to target gang violence and at-risk youth."

Obama has reneged on his pledge, made in July 2008, to undo Bush-era rules permitting direct taxpayer funding of religious institutions.

Moreover, by appointing former campaign staff to faith-based posts, Obama risks the appearance of politicizing the effort, something Bush and Rove notoriously did. "The only way to avoid the appearance is to do it differently," says the Rev. C. Welton Gaddy, president of the Interfaith Alliance, a religious liberty and church-state separation watchdog group. "The White House needs to be reminded of that. They're naïve if they assume that people aren't going to look at that."

The Rev. Irene Monroe, an LGBT rights activist and doctoral candidate at Harvard Divinity School, says, "It makes sense, in a political sense, to keep Joshua [DuBois]. He's made these contacts. It's not about effective change. It's about, How do I keep that voting bloc?"

Although Kelley did not work on the Obama campaign, CACG was described by Katie Paris, communications director for the Democratic-leaning Faith in Public Life (FPL), as having had a "very aggressive engagement in this election cycle." The co-founder of CACG, Elizabeth Frawley Bagley, who helped the Obama campaign reach out to Catholics, is now the State Department's special representative for global partnerships and is working on global interfaith relations.

After the election FPL and CACG helped promote the idea that Catholics were crucial swing voters who shifted to Obama. Michael Sean Winters, author of the book *Left at the Altar: How the Democrats Lost the Catholics and How the Catholics Can Save the Democrats*, wrote about Kelley's HHS appointment, "As well as helping faith-based organizations get funding for their programs, she will serve as liaison between the Churches and the administration."

Church-state separation advocates would prefer to eliminate the faith-based office entirely. But knowing that Obama was intent on keeping it, they supported him because of his campaign promises to reverse the most egregious aspects of Bush's policies. But Obama has reneged on his pledge, made in a July 2008 speech in Zanesville, Ohio, to undo Bush-era rules permitting direct taxpayer funding of religious institutions and allowing institutions that receive federal grants to engage in hiring discrimination based on religion.

On the direct-funding question, Obama is "encouraging," but not requiring, grant recipients to form secular nonprofits in order to receive federal aid. He punted on the hiring issue by referring questions on a "case-by-case" basis to White House and Justice Department lawyers; DuBois will help decide which cases are referred for legal evaluation. In addition, although Obama promised to end proselytizing by faith-based grantees, no policy sets forth rules against proselytizing or a method of enforcing them.

DuBois has promised a full overhaul of the White House OFBNP and federal agency faith-based, neighborhood partnership centers to increase the accountability of grant recipients and to monitor proselytizing, and he pledges to make clear to grant recipients "what the boundaries are." But defining what counts as proselytizing, never mind monitoring instances of it in hundreds of federally funded programs across the country, is a daunting task. In subsequent press conferences, DuBois has been vague about how he will establish or monitor such boundaries. (DuBois declined to be interviewed for this article, and the White House press office did not respond to repeated requests for comment.)

"I am very disappointed that President Obama's faith-based program is being rolled out without barring evangelism and religious discrimination in taxpayer-funded programs," says the Rev. Barry Lynn, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State. "It should be obvious that taxpayer-funded religious bias offends our civil rights laws, our Constitution and our shared sense of values."

Sean Faircloth, executive director of the Secular Coalition for America (SCA), says, "The president has yet to implement his stated policy, so today government funds can still be used to discriminate based on religion or lack thereof. That's unconstitutional." Americans United and the SCA, along with other members of the Coalition Against Religious Discrimination (CARD), a network of civil liberties groups, have been urging Obama to repeal the Bush rules.

Among religious progressives, the dissatisfaction runs deep. The case-by-case rule "doesn't offer much assurance for people who are concerned about discrimination," says the Interfaith Alliance's Gaddy, also a CARD member. "What is it that you have to see to decide not to discriminate?" The White House recently appointed Gaddy to a task force to recommend how to improve the "constitutional and legal footing" of the office, but the question of hiring discrimination, he says, is not on the agenda.

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Center-right religious activists, assiduously courted by Obama during the campaign, see the hiring question differently. The ability to engage in what they call "co-religionist" hiring—for example, not hiring a gay applicant because his sexual orientation violates the organization's religious beliefs—is central to their mission of providing faith-based services, they insist. Without that ability, they have no interest in the faith-based initiative.

After Obama's Zanesville speech, these activists pressured his campaign to reverse course. In response, the campaign quietly promised religious activists that Obama would keep the Bush rules in place. As the Rev. Tony Campolo, who served on the DNC's platform committee, wrote in the Huffington Post earlier this year, the Obama campaign sought to "still the anxieties" of leaders of some of the "largest faith-based organizations in the country" by "giving assurances that if no fuss was made by drawing attention to these problems, the policies that were in place on these matters during the Bush Administration would be continued."

It is this constituency—center-right evangelicals and Catholics—that Obama continued to appease through the creation of a twenty-five-member advisory council to the OFBNP. The council's mission is to provide policy guidance on poverty, abortion reduction, responsible fatherhood and global interfaith relations. Church-state separation advocates see the council's mandate, which frames major policy issues in religious terms and institutionalizes an outside council of advisers, as a step beyond even Bush's faith-based initiative. "This council either comes dangerously close, or it *is* a kind of institutional intertwining of religion and government," says Gaddy.

Kissling calls the OFBNP's mandate to address abortion "shocking." Expanding the role of the faith-based office to include abortion policy "sends a very clear message about what the administration thinks religion is and what the philosophical underpinnings of the administration's approach to abortion is. The administration's approach is religious."

The Rev. Peter Laarman, executive director of Progressive Christians Uniting, maintains that the advisory council's to-do list is aimed at placating conservatives, not advancing a progressive religious agenda. "They are issues of primary concern to religious conservatives, and even poverty reduction has a conservative framing. I mean, why aren't religious leaders being asked for advice on progressive taxation? On how to deal with big money in politics?… Those to me are issues with as much or more religious significance as supporting stable family life."

While some on the OFBNP's advisory council, notably Sojourners founder Jim Wallis, have claimed the mantle of "religious progressive" and, more recently, "religious left," the bona fide religious left has largely been sidelined. When you look at the composition of the council, says Laarman, you see that "these were highly strategic selections with a view toward rewarding or cultivating very specific faith groups. With a couple of exceptions, hard-core religious progressives aren't there."

Of the first fifteen advisory council appointments, made February 5, only one was prochoice, and more, including a Catholic and a Southern Baptist, were ardent opponents of legal abortion.

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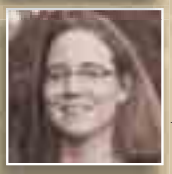

Marcy Wheeler, a pioneering blogger and Hillman Award winner, writes for Firedoglake.com and is the author of *Anatomy of Deceit*.

moderated by Victor Navasky

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Two months later, when the White House filled out the remaining ten appointments, it added prochoice religious voices, but they were not from the ranks of the most prominent activists on abortion, such as representatives of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice. Opponents of LGBT equality also outnumbered gay-rights proponents, although the administration later added Harry Knox, director of the Faith and Religion Program at the Human Rights Campaign.

Center-right abortion-reduction proponents, however, have had an easier time securing a hearing. When David Gushee, a professor of Christian ethics at Mercer University and one of the most prominent voices from the evangelical center, complained publicly that Obama was not doing enough to fulfill his pledge to reduce abortions, he immediately received a call from the White House. "I regularly, weekly, get invited to come to the White House for a meeting or to listen or participate in a conference call on a range of things," Gushee told me.

Gushee was the principal author of a 1996 manifesto, *The America We Seek: A Statement of Pro-Life Principle and Concern*, signed by forty-five religious-right leaders as well as advisory council member Wallis. It posited that it was unlikely *Roe v. Wade* would be overruled, and called instead for criminalizing doctors who perform abortions (but not "women in crisis"), opening more "crisis pregnancy centers" and passing a constitutional amendment overturning *Roe* and giving fetuses personhood status. Gushee said recently, "The principles articulated in this statement still reflect my own views."

'There is more experience and expertise…in the faith community than in…HHS, HUD and Labor.' —Jim Wallis, OFBNP advisory council

Reproductive rights activists remain optimistic that Obama will ultimately back a policy that focuses on preventing unintended pregnancies through comprehensive sex education and contraception, along with economic support for women who choose to carry unintended pregnancies to term. The White House's policy discussions on abortion focus on "best practices" for reducing abortion; overturning *Roe* is off the table. Still, Obama has invited hard-right antichoice organizations like Concerned Women for America into these conversations, as well as advocates of the Pregnant Women Support Act, a bill backed by Democrats for Life and Alexia Kelley. The bill aims to influence pregnant women to "choose life" by bolstering social services for them, but it provides no funding for contraception or sex education.

OFBNP's plan to go into partnership with faith-based groups through federal agencies is premised on the notion that these groups are indispensable to solving problems ranging from healthcare delivery to poverty. "We can't solve these challenges here in Washington," DuBois has told faith groups, echoing Obama's campaign rhetoric on the importance of faith-based programs. Likewise, Jim Wallis has said, "There is more experience and expertise and relationship there in the faith community than in the departments of HHS, HUD and Labor and all that combined," a position he has since extended to include the CIA and the State and Defense Departments. Wallis may have overstated the case, but even many progressives agree that government partnerships with faith-based groups are essential to delivering social services, a practice promoted by Bill Clinton through his charitable choice program. Columnist E.J. Dionne and church-state separation expert Melissa Rogers (who serves on the advisory council), for example, accepted that premise in a December Brookings Institution report recommending changes Obama should make to the Bush program.

Frederica Kramer, an independent social policy consultant to the Urban Institute who is working on a book about faith-based organizations, contests this logic. "There's no empirical basis from existing research and evaluations to say that faith-based groups are better at delivering services," she contends. Kramer says that while faith-based organizations play important roles, such as the disaster response after Hurricane Katrina, "one doesn't want to mistake access like a congregation has for the ability to deliver long-term, professionally based services." Kramer adds that reliance on faith-based organizations poses "the question of what happens to non-adherents or outliers."

Calling the boundaries between the faith and secular content of programs "very porous," Kramer says that eliminating proselytizing is a challenge. "Vulnerable populations are not well positioned to make choices—particularly children, people in court-ordered treatment programs and people with mental health problems."

Another monitoring issue the project faces is untangling faith-based funding streams from general ones. Rob Boston, of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, says, "Rules against earmarking money specifically for faith-based projects—which would be illegal—have created a situation where grants going to faith-based organizations can be masked." As a result, it is hard to know whether federal grant money—disbursed through block grants to states—is being used for faith-based projects and is therefore subject to the monitoring DuBois says he is intent on implementing.

Finally, because Obama has created the OFBNP by executive order (as did Bush), it can be modified—for the worse—by future presidents without approval or oversight by Congress. This is a "major part of the problem," says Gaddy. "We got the office by executive order; we're getting a revision by executive order. The next president could by executive order abolish it or say, I want in the faith-based office a panel of advisers that could tell me how to make this nation more religious."

In the end, progressive religious activists question not only the constitutionality but the entire purpose of the office. "The purpose of government is to serve all the people irrespective of what they believe or, better yet, don't believe," says Reverend Monroe. Obama "is pandering to a very conservative base that raised its horrible head during the Bush administration. He can't find a way to undo that but thinks he can refashion that. But he's actually just re-inscribing the problem." ■

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...And a Law for Poor People

Obama wants to repeal many strictures on legal services funding. But more needs to be done.

by PETER EDELMAN

ZINA SAUNDERS

Federally funded legal services lawyers for poor people have been operating with one hand tied behind their back since Newt Gingrich and his brand of Republicans took control of Congress in the mid-1990s. Now that we have a Democratic president and Congress, it is time to roll back the restrictions that federal money brings—constraints that lawyers for paying clients do not encounter. In his detailed budget request for the coming year, President Obama proposes to repeal the most onerous of the strictures—a welcome step. Congress is currently considering the president's proposals, and should enact them into law.

Legal services lawyers help low-income people stave off eviction, resist predatory lenders, protect themselves from domestic violence, obtain public benefits and deal with family issues. Federal funding was first provided as part of President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty and is distributed by the federally chartered Legal Services Corporation. Well over half the full-time lawyers for the poor work for organizations that receive federal money, so the limits on what they can do have a serious impact on a field that is already greatly understaffed.

The impulse to regulate lawyers for the poor is of course not unrelated to our proclivity to regulate the poor in other ways, especially those poor people we deem undeserving. Various interests began trying to curb legal services for poor people from the moment federal funding was first provided. Agribusiness and other businesses that made money on the backs of the poor, as well as some public officials, thought it was outrageous that taxpayer money could finance lawsuits to make them obey the law as it related to poor people.

Even so, major limitations on federally supported legal services activities were not adopted until the Gingrich revolution, although funding was cut severely by President Reagan (and again during the Gingrich era). Advocacy by the American Bar Association and bipartisan efforts by members of Congress, especially lawyers, kept the program largely free from such limits for a surprisingly long time.

Perhaps the best-known restriction is the ban on class-action suits. Another that has had a big impact is the bar on reimbursement of attorneys' fees in cases where federal or state law lets every other successful litigant collect them (civil rights suits are a prime example). But the list is quite long. Others apply to specific client groups and categories of cases and activities—prison inmates, abortion cases, undocumented and many legal immigrants, redistricting cases and legislative and administrative advocacy generally. The most damaging, though, is the one that makes all the restrictions apply to money the legal services organization receives from sources other than the federal government.

President Obama's proposal calls for repeal of what are perhaps the most damaging federal-funding restrictions: those that apply to other sources of funding; the bar on attorneys' fees, which reduces the already parched supply of lawyers for the poor; and the ban on class actions. If enacted, the repeal would constitute a welcome boost to low-income people's access to justice.

The response from Congress so far has been mixed. The House voted to repeal only the restriction on reimbursement of attorneys' fees, while the Senate Appropriations Committee voted to eliminate almost all restrictions on use of nonfederal funds as well as the restriction on attorneys' fees, but only in cases brought with nonfederal funds. Once the Senate completes its work, the matter will go to a House-Senate conference committee to resolve the differences.

With current Congressional reforms still undecided, much more remains to be done in the future, including repeal of all the restrictions.

Federal funding, which dropped to $278 million during the Gingrich era, has crept back upward, reaching $390 million this year. President Obama has requested $435 million for fiscal year 2010, to which the House has added $5 million, while the Senate committee is proposing a total of $400 million. But if funding for the program, which totaled $300 million in 1980, had kept pace with inflation, it would be about $750 million now. Senator Tom Harkin of Iowa, himself a former legal services lawyer, has introduced legislation to authorize annual legal services spending at that level.

The overall decline in federal support is the bad news. The somewhat better news is that other funding has come along in the meantime. Funding from a source called IOLTA, or Interest on Lawyers' Trust Accounts (bank accounts into which lawyers temporarily deposit money pending completion of a commercial transaction), reached $215 million in 2008 (but will plummet in 2009 as interest rates decline to record lows). States also stepped into the picture, providing $212 million in 2008, and law firms, individual lawyers, foundations, attorneys' fees (for the non-federally funded groups) and other sources brought total funding for civil legal assistance to about $1.2 billion last year. Pro bono help from lawyers provides another significant source of assistance.

Was the 2008 amount enough? Hardly, especially with the

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cuts occurring now in IOLTA and every other category of funding except the modest federal increases. Even before the current wave of reductions, federally funded lawyers estimated they were turning away one person for every one they served. Studies all over the country show that when one figures in those who need legal help but never try to obtain a lawyer, the total funding plus pro bono volunteering is meeting less than 20 percent of the need. And this when the number of poor people is rising along with recession-related legal needs (evictions, mortgage foreclosures, denials of public benefits and the like).

The funding mix described above tells an important story. In every large city there are many legal services organizations that receive no federal money. They are supported by private donations, attorneys' fees, and state and local public appropriations, and amounts in each of these categories are shrinking. We need to focus not only on shoring up funding and pro bono efforts but on building in every state and community a real system of legal services on the ground, whether federally funded or not, that is transparent and accessible to people who need help.

Federal support (without restrictions and with more money) needs to include funding for training and backup expertise, another victim of the Gingrich attack. Fifteen national support centers and five regional training centers lost their federal funding at that time. The Legal Services Corporation should be not only a major funder of legal services but also the national quarterback and cheerleader for a sensible structure of services at state and local levels. State Access to Justice commissions (I happen to chair the commission in the District of Columbia) should play a pivotal role in the task of system-building.

Of course, there are even bigger issues involved here. Reagan- and Bush-era federal judges preside over the cases, and statutory protections eroded by Congressional action over that period often constitute the applicable law. Appointing good judges and enacting wise laws are crucial. And if we didn't have so many poor people, we would have fewer people with the multiple legal problems that disproportionately affect the poor and more people who could afford to pay for legal assistance. Poverty is the underlying cause of the disproportionate legal problems of the poor.

Although we shouldn't overestimate the payoff from repealing the restrictions on the federally funded lawyers, it is significant. President Obama's proposals are important and should be enacted. The restrictions are meanspirited and punitive; they amount to a de facto violation of equal protection of the laws for low-income people. Hire a private lawyer and you'll get the whole kit of tools and remedies. But go to the legal services office, and you'll quickly find out that America thinks the poor are not as deserving as the rest of us. ■

Remembering Robert McNamara

by JONATHAN SCHELL

I first met Robert McNamara in the summer of 1967.

The meeting had been arranged by Jerome Weisner, then the provost of MIT. I had just returned from a trip to South Vietnam, where, as a reporter for *The New Yorker*, I had witnessed the substantial destruction by American air power of two provinces, Quang Ngai and Quang Tinh. Flying in the back seat of Forward Air Control planes—small Cessnas that coordinated the bombing and strafing runs by radio contact with ground forces and the bomber pilots—I measured the destruction that had already occurred and witnessed at first hand the destruction of villages as it transpired. The policies were clear. Leaflets dropped on villages had announced, "The Vietcong hide among innocent women and children in your villages.... If the Vietcong in this area use you or your village for this purpose, you can expect death from the sky." Death from the sky came. After it had, more leaflets were dropped, saying, "Your village was bombed because you harbored Vietcong.... Your village will be bombed again if you harbor the Vietcong in any way."

ZINA SAUNDERS

The results were also clear. As I could see from the air, in Quang Ngai province some 70 percent of the villages had been destroyed. All this, in one of the euphemisms that were the lingua franca of the Vietnam War, was called "the air war." Actually, it was one-sided air slaughter, mostly of civilians. I was 23 years old at the time and had no notion what a war crime was; but it became clear to me later that that was what I had been witnessing, day after day. (Six months after I left, in March 1968, American troops committed the massacre at My Lai, in which some 350 people were killed.)

Weisner, a friend of McNamara's, thought he should know what I had seen. The purpose of my meeting McNamara, which by agreement was to be held confidential, was to tell him. I didn't know it, but his loss of faith in the war was already well under way, and that November he announced his departure from office to take up the presidency of the World Bank. The familiar figure with the glinting rimless glasses and the rigid hair forced back, as if it were spun glass, greeted me at the

Jonathan Schell, the Harold Willens Peace Fellow at The Nation Institute, is the author of The Real War, *in which the reporting on Quang Ngai and Quang Tinh appears.*

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door of his seemingly tennis-court-size office overlooking the River Entrance of the Pentagon and, across the Potomac, the Washington Monument.

In the man I met, I felt a prodigious, ceaseless, restless energy that I suspected he could not turn off if he wanted to. Doing one thing, he seemed already to be thinking about the next, or the thing after that. At rest, he seemed to be moving more quickly than most people when running. As I began to recount my observations, he pinned me with a stare. My feeling was that he was not precisely a good listener but might, in his self-directed way, be a good absorber of information. He took me to a map of Vietnam on an easel at the back of his office and asked me to locate the areas of destruction. I felt that the request was a test—one I happened to be excellently prepared to take, as I had carried maps with me in the Forward Air Control planes and had measured levels of destruction in the entire province of Quang Ngai.

McNamara seemed deeply engaged, but made no comment, asking me only if I had anything in writing. I said I did, but that it was in longhand. He suggested that I produce a typed copy, and provided me with the office just down the hall of a general who was away, if memory serves, in Africa. What McNamara did not know was that the article was book-length. It turned out to take three days to dictate the piece into the general's Dictaphone, with chapter after chapter emerging handsomely typed from the bowels of the Pentagon.

I then handed the finished project to McNamara, who thanked me but said nothing further about the matter, either then or at any time thereafter.

Yet there was a sequel. Fifteen years later, in 1982, when Neil Sheehan was researching his classic book about the war, *A Bright Shining Lie*, he came across several documents concerning my Pentagon-assisted manuscript, and brought me copies. It appears from the documents that McNamara had promptly sent the manuscript to the US ambassador in South Vietnam, Ellsworth Bunker, who in turn ordered a certain Hataway to retrace my steps in Quang Ngai and Quang Tinh, and also requested a Bob Kelly to write an overall report, with a view to discrediting my reporting and arranging to get *The Atlantic* (where Bunker mistakenly thought it was scheduled to appear) to "withhold publication." He circulated a memo recommending these things to McNamara, Under Secretary of State Nicholas Katzenbach and Assistant Secretary of State William Bundy. The "action" officer was Secretary of State Dean Rusk. Those I had interviewed, including the Forward Air Control pilots, were reinterviewed, and affidavits were taken from them. Two civilian pilots were dispatched to fly over the provinces and check my calculations of the damage. Plans were considered to publicly rebut my findings. However, the resulting report inconveniently found that "Mr. Schell's estimates are substantially correct." It appears that no further action was taken. In any case, McNamara announced his resignation as defense secretary around this time.

Perhaps frustrated by his failure to find factual errors in my reporting, the author of the report offered some editorial comments that inadvertently epitomized the flawed thinking on which the entire war rested. I had been unaware, he thought,

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of some extenuating factors regarding the destruction I had witnessed. I had not known, he thought, that "the population is totally hostile." Indeed, in the eyes of the Vietcong, "the Viet Cong *are* the people." Thus did one of the main reasons for not fighting the war in the first place—namely, the perfectly obvious hatred the majority of the population felt for the American invasion and occupation—become, in this calculation, a reason for continuing the war.

When I next spoke at length with McNamara, in 1998, it was not about Vietnam but about nuclear arms, on which we were agreed as much as we had disagreed about Vietnam: we both believed that the only decent and sensible thing to do with the bomb was to get rid of it. McNamara's turnabout on the nuclear matter was dramatic. More than any other government official, he had been responsible for institutionalizing the prime strategic doctrine of the nuclear age, deterrence, otherwise known as mutual assured destruction. Now he wanted to dispense with it. He was table-poundingly intense in his conviction.

In fact, by then we were closer on Vietnam as well, for McNamara had, after two decades of silence regarding the war, published his book *In Retrospect*, in which he repudiated his former justifications for the war, famously writing of the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, "We were wrong, terribly wrong." He had also revealed an emotional side under the titanium exterior. We know now that at his farewell meeting as defense secretary, McNamara wept as he acknowledged the uselessness of the bombing. Was he thinking of the devastated villages of Quang Ngai? I don't know. On many occasions when confessing his errors regarding the war, his voice shook or cracked and tears came. Like a certain kind of man common in his generation, he was emotional without being introspective. The book was "retrospective," not introspective—it was a public reflection on a public matter and contained almost nothing in the way of soul-searching. In its tone and style, the book, though it had to have been written out of a profound reservoir of feeling, reached for the stable ground of objective analysis.

Many critics have asserted—rightly, I think—that he stopped short of full understanding, that he sought to hold fast to claims of noble intentions that the record cannot sustain. The issue is how noble intentions really can be when when the facts that show their results turning to horror are readily at hand yet overlooked. Should McNamara have been more forthcoming in his regrets? He should. Should he have expressed them earlier? Certainly. Should he have resigned in protest once he understood that the war was futile and wrong? Yes. Should he never have recommended the war or presided over it in the first place, and should there never have been an American war in Vietnam? Oh, Lord, yes! Recent American history with that war subtracted? What a vision of a better country that was attainable but lost! Certainly, if one puts McNamara's tears on one side of the scales and the deaths of some 3 million Vietnamese and 58,000 Americans on the other, there is no doubt which way the scales would tip.

On the other hand, how many public figures of his importance have ever expressed any regret for their mistakes and follies and crimes? As the decades of the twentieth century rolled by, the heaps of corpses towered, ever higher, up to the skies, and now they pile up again in the new century. But how many of those in high office who have made these things happen have ever said, "I made a mistake," or "I was terribly wrong," or shed a tear over their actions? I come up with one, Robert McNamara. I deduce that such acts of repentance are very hard to perform.

If a statue is ever made to him, as probably there will not be, let it show him weeping. It was the best of him. ■

Letters

(continued from page 2)

I have never met a patient who was glad to terminate a pregnancy; they did so only because of a natural and admirable sense of self-preservation after becoming aware of danger to themselves.

The assassin's bullet that killed Dr. Tiller ended a productive and honorable life. Moreover, we are all victims of this terrible, heinous crime. Although the beliefs of those on each side of the abortion issue will never be resolved, we must all stop the strident name-calling that has so divided our society. We must follow President Obama's suggestion to come together and devote our efforts to decrease the number of abortions by preventing unwanted pregnancies. This approach will not only end much hatred and violence; it will greatly contribute to an improvement in the physical and mental health of all Americans.

Laurence Burd, MD

Make That 1,501!

Silver Spring, Md.

As a frequent letter writer to newspapers and magazines (about 13,000 in twenty years and about 8,000 in the last decade), I can only envy Cy Shain's record, thirty-nine letters published in the last decade in the *New York Times* [David Margolick, "All the Letters Fit to Print," June 15]. However, an important statistic was omitted: how many letters he wrote to the *Times*. If his percentage of success with this prestigious newspaper was 50 percent I stand in awe; if 5 percent, impressive but not earth-shattering. A 2 percent success rate of being published in major newspapers is standard for me, with lesser media at 10 to 15 percent. This means 1,500 published letters for me over the years, but certainly a far cry from the success of Cy Shain in the *Times*.

Nelson Marans

Vulcan Mind Meld

Santa Monica, Calif.

Dude, this version [of *Star Trek*] was awesome. Who'da thought that a concept from before I was born could keep me in my seat for longer than ten minutes! I need at least ten explosions, twenty lens flares and ear-crunching sound to overcome my Halo 3 ADD. Not that I missed a theme or anything. I got it, dude—make lots of money for Paramount. Sweet! [Stuart Klawans, "Live Long and Prosper," June 15].

My sister reads, and she said for me to read *Where Angels Fear to Tread* by Yolanda Pascal—sci-fi for *Star Trek* lovers. I actually read it. It was awesome. But it didn't have any music, so I had to run Ludo on my iPod. Tight!

Live long, dude, whatever.

Jill Jackson

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Books & the Arts.

Mixing History and Desire

by MARIA MARGARONIS

The poet Constantine Cavafy was a cosmopolitan by both birth and inclination. His parents were Constantinople Greeks of what was then known as "good family"; by the time their youngest son was born in 1863, they were settled in Alexandria, Egypt, prosperous pillars of a thriving community. But after his father's death in 1870, the family fortunes failed and Cavafy's mother took her sons to live for a few years near her late husband's relatives in Liverpool and London. (It's said that afterward Cavafy's Greek retained a faint English inflection.) The dimly remembered life of parties and servants was gone; in the early 1880s the British bombardment of Alexandria destroyed the family home. By the time the novelist E.M. Forster met Cavafy in 1918, he was living in a small apartment on the run-down Rue Lepsius. Alexandria, wrote Forster, "founded upon cotton with the concurrence of onions and eggs," was "scarcely a city of the soul."

For Cavafy, it was home. Living outside the young Greek state among Egyptians, Greeks and Jews, he could remain committed to a fading, idealized Hellenism free from the crude taint of nationalism and borders. He told Forster that the Greeks and the English were almost exactly alike, except for one crucial difference: "We Greeks have lost our capital—and the results are what you see. Pray, my dear Forster, oh pray, that you never lose your capital."

By "capital" he meant both Constantinople and a less tangible inheritance, one that lies close to the bone of his precise and parsimonious work. All his life, he was drawn to what was lost: forgotten Greek kingdoms on the edge of the Roman empire, backwaters of Byzantium, beautiful boys glimpsed once or briefly held and never seen again. "The memory of that long and haphazard pursuit," writes Daniel Mendelsohn,

> speaks of a certain kind of relation to the rest of the world: experience rejected in favor of remembrance, the center rejected in favor of the margin. A sense of the beautiful hovering just beyond your reach, to be reflected upon and considered. The reflection becomes, in its own way, another kind of possessing.

Or, to transpose that feeling to the political realm,

> Here was a culture…that had created a great romance out of a great defeat, a civilization that had been able to endure loss and real privation because it believed in its own myth of lost beauty, the possession of which, however brief and long ago, elevated the lovely and effete vanquished far above the crass, practical victors.

These Cavafian meditations are not from Mendelsohn's excellent introduction to the *Collected Poems* (which he has translated with a slim volume of unfinished work, appearing here for the first time in English) but from his graceful memoir *The Elusive Embrace*, published ten years ago. The first passage glosses an early pursuit of Mendelsohn's own; the second describes not Greece but the American South, where Mendelsohn studied classics as an undergraduate. (His family memoir, *The Lost*, evokes another vanished world, that of his European relatives who died in the Holocaust.) Together, they begin to suggest why this eloquent critic felt compelled to learn modern Greek and to enter as deeply as he could into Cavafy's world of stoic longing and elusive memory, intense desire and cool, appraising intellection.

Cavafy did not publish a book in his lifetime; he preferred to distribute his poems to a few close friends in pamphlets printed at his own expense, partly in order to avoid the corruptions of the marketplace. But long before Forster "discovered" him, he was consciously writing in a cosmopolitan tradition. As well as Robert Browning, whose dramatic monologues inform Cavafy's own, Tennyson, Keats, Wilde, Emerson and Whitman all left traces in his work; Baudelaire and the French Parnassians were another important influence. After Cavafy's death in 1933, his sensibility began to color the work of other poets, among them Auden, Brecht, Brodsky, Milosz and Montale, as well as the Americans Robert Hass, Louise Glück, James Merrill, Rachel Hadas and Mark Doty. It

THE CAVAFY ARCHIVE

Constantine Cavafy

C.P. Cavafy
Collected Poems.
Translated, with introduction and commentary, by Daniel Mendelsohn.
Knopf. 547 pp. $35.

C.P. Cavafy
The Unfinished Poems.
Translated, with introduction and commentary, by Daniel Mendelsohn.
Knopf. 121 pp. $30.

Maria Margaronis writes from The Nation*'s London bureau. Some of her translations are forthcoming in* The Greek Poets: Homer to the Present, *edited by Peter Constantine, Edmund Keeley, Rachel Hadas and Karen Van Dyck (Norton).*

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was Auden who brought Cavafy's work to a broad American readership by introducing Rae Dalven's translation of the *Complete Poems* in 1961: "I can think of poems," he wrote, "which, if Cavafy were unknown to me, I should have written quite differently, or perhaps not written at all." The first edition of what became the canonical English Cavafy, a clean, transparent *Collected Poems* translated by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard, appeared in 1975. The past five years have produced a flurry of new versions, by Aliki Barnstone, Alan Boegehold, Stratis Haviaras, Evangelos Sachperoglou and Avi Sharon. Why, then, do we need another?

Mendelsohn's answer is "to restore the balance," by which he means, to restore Cavafy's particularity. Previous translations have often aimed to make his work accessible by drawing out what appears universal in it; Mendelsohn wants to deepen and complicate—to make Cavafy less our contemporary and more his own, sometimes abstruse and often enigmatic Alexandrian self. Cavafy's best-known work in English falls into two groups. There are the few great "philosophical" poems ("The City," "Waiting for the Barbarians," "Ithaca"), which seem to contain a message and which lend themselves to anthologizing and occasional use. Then there are the poems of desire, startlingly modern in their intimacy and vulnerability. Here is the end of "On the Stairs," from 1904, which Mendelsohn translates with a hint of Whitman's rhythms:

> And yet the love you wanted, I had
> to give you;
> the love I wanted—your eyes told
> me so,
> tired and suspicious—you had it to
> give me.
> Our bodies sensed and sought each
> other out;
> our blood and skin understood.
>
> But we hid from each other, we two,
> terrified.

In these poems men exchange glances on the street or in shops, where their hands touch furtively over the merchandise. They wait for their lovers in bars; feel jealousy or shame; fall on disheveled beds, "flawlessly beautiful"; remember, later, after years have passed, "The body's lines. Red lips. Limbs made for pleasure." Many of them are dead before their time, like the Homeric heroes whose beauty haunts their bearing, or otherwise lost to the poet. They may be wealthy, living in Hellenistic or early Byzantine times, like Cleitus, whose old nurse prays to the pagan gods to save him from a fever: "The foolish woman/doesn't realize that it matters little to the black demon/whether a Christian is or isn't cured." They may be working class, in "threadbare clothes" and "workshoes split apart." Or they are classless, timeless, as plausibly New Yorkers of the twenty-first century as they are Alexandrians of the late nineteenth. From "In the Street":

> His appealing face, somewhat pallid;
> his chestnut eyes, looking tired;
> twenty-five years old, but looks
> more like twenty;
> with something artistic about his
> clothes
> —something in the color of the tie,
> the collar's shape—
> aimlessly he ambles down the street,
> as if still hypnotized by the illicit
> pleasure,
> by the very illicit pleasure he has
> had.

Mendelsohn is at his best as a translator of these poems, rescuing them from the slight coyness that dogged earlier versions with a voice as tender and forthright as Cavafy's own. (This is not an easy task. Some of Cavafy's favorite words have no good English equivalent. *Idoni*, from which we get "hedonism," is deeper and richer than "pleasure"; *aisthitikos* combines refinement, sensuality and beauty with a faint hint of the consciously decorative.) Rightly, though, Mendelsohn wants his readers to look beyond Cavafy as gay icon *avant la lettre* and comprehend his whole artistic project, which "holds the historical and the erotic in a single embrace."

Cavafy was approaching 50 before he published an overtly homoerotic poem. His idealized men and boys appear, at first, as art: sculpted in Parian marble ("The Retinue of Dionysus"), etched on a coin ("Orophernes"), conjured from stone and dream ("Sculptor From Tyana"), immured in marble tombs. Or they are mere suggestions, invisible interlocutors: many poems are written in the second person or as dramatic monologues, implicating the reader. Taking shape as stone or voice but not (yet) flesh, the objects of his longing are shadowy presences. The moment of fullness, triumph, consummation is always skirted or longed for; remembered, short-lived, doomed. This is as true in history as it is in love. Cavafy describes the battle of Actium from the point of view of a peddler knocked down by the crowd ("The Year 31 B.C. in Alexandria") and sets a swaggering poem about Alexander's triumphs at the moment when the Greek kingdoms are about to fall to Rome ("In 200 B.C."). Poems that savor memories of love are interspersed with historical ones that hinge on hindsight's ironies. Love fails and kingdoms fall; young men grow cold in graves. In the act of arresting time, art makes death visible.

Cavafy called himself a *poietes historikos*: a poet-historian, or historical poet. It was through history that he found a way of writing openly about his desire and escaping the cul-de-sac of pure aestheticism. Cavafy's daily life was urban, indoor and narrow. For more than thirty years he worked as a clerk in the Egyptian government's Third Circle of Irrigation; he had dinner each night with his mother, the imposing Harikleia, until her death in 1899. Though he was an Alexandrian to the end, the modern Egyptian city is not explicitly present in his work except, perhaps, in the poems of desire and in "Sham-el-Nessim," an early, repudiated work about a spring festival. Two poems, "Walls" and "The Windows," suggest a sense of confinement imposed from the outside: "Without pity, without shame, without consideration/they've built around me enormous, towering walls."

Yet that confinement—whether one reads it as a metaphor for the closet, exile, provincial ennui, historical belatedness or textual frustration—also helped to shape Cavafy's poetic strategy. With the breadth of contemporary life shut out, he could concentrate on the long corridor of time and its play of ironies. As Edward Said observed, even in "Ithaca," the quintessential poem of possibility, which praises the delights of the journey over the destination, the pleasures are all specified in advance:

> may you stop at Phoenician trading
> posts
> and there acquire the finest wares:
> mother-of-pearl and coral, amber
> and ebony,
> and heady perfumes of every kind

Having already made his voyage, the speaker knows what it is to arrive at the disappointing end, to understand with the cool wisdom of age "what these Ithacas mean." (Or, as Mendelsohn rather oddly has it, following the Greek word order, "these Ithacas; what they mean.") The poem's sensual pleasures are both spiced and softened by hindsight, and by the suggestion of regret in the repeated phrase "hope that the road is a long one." And that regret, in turn, deepens the note of subtle tenderness in the older man's advice.

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It is this combination of honesty and sympathy that underpins and complicates Cavafy's historical ironies. As Mendelsohn explains in his introduction and exhaustive notes (which parse the most difficult poems for those of us who can't tell our Lagids from our Seleucids), Cavafy's mature poetry owes much to his engagement with two very different historians: the Enlightenment Englishman Edward Gibbon, whose *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* took a dim view of Byzantium and Christianity, and the Greek romantic nationalist Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos, whose work constructs a line of Greek identity from ancient times to the modern nation-state. The poems set in doomed Hellenistic kingdoms on the outskirts of Roman power, or in the Byzantium of Julian the Apostate (an early emperor who tried to restore the Olympian gods), or in distant provinces where petty officials pride themselves on their Greek ("unhellenized we are not, I rather think")—all these press delicately against the bruise of Greek decline while seeing, with Gibbon, its inevitability. At the same time, they keep in view the crude and ephemeral nature of all temporal power, a source of both consolation and regret.

In his best historical poems Cavafy maintains a scrupulous suspension, so that each reading suggests a different balance of insight and empathy. Is he describing self-delusion or heroism? Artistry or conceit? Often the ambiguity emerges at the point where public identities blur. In "Darius," the poet Phernazes is writing an epic in Greek about the Persian ancestor of his own Hellenized king, somewhere in Asia Minor. As he tries to imagine Darius' feelings on seizing the Persian throne ("arrogance and intoxication, perhaps; but no—more/like an awareness of the vanity of grandeur"), he hears that war with the Romans has begun. In the instant of danger he becomes neither Greek nor Persian but Cappadocian, rooted in his local world: "Great gods, protectors of Asia, help us." And yet his epic rhetoric has its own gravitational pull: with the enemy at the gate, "arrogance and intoxication" suddenly seems the more appealing choice. The inconclusive flickering of personal ambition, political interest, local allegiance and anxiety is made visible here at the moment when power shifts.

Cavafy's interest in equivocal identities also, of course, reflects his own experience as a Greek in Alexandria and as a homosexual raised in the Orthodox Church, whose pagan ancestors once valued same-sex love. The pain of double loyalties stands out in some of the poems about young men's deaths, where history and desire most obviously clasp hands. In the beautifully translated "Myres: Alexandria in 340 A.D.," we overhear the thoughts of a young pagan who has gone to the house of his dead Christian friend and stands, as boys so often do in Cavafy, out in the corridor, watching the preparations for the funeral. By the end, Christianity has become death's threatening accomplice:

> Vaguely I had the feeling that
> Myres was going far away from me;
> had a feeling that he, a Christian,
> was being united
> with his own, and that I was
> becoming
> a stranger to him, very much a
> stranger…
> I flew out of their horrible house,
> and quickly left before their
> Christianity
> could get hold of, could alter, the
> memory of Myres.

Myres has many cousins: Ianthes, the Alexandrian Jew who cannot help but give himself to Hellenism ("Of the Jews"); Leucius, whose half-eroded tombstone mentions both Jesus Christ and the Egyptian month of Hathor ("In the Month of Hathor"); and Ammon the Egyptian poet, dead at 29 in the year 610, whose friend commissions a Greek epitaph for him ("For Ammon"). Mendelsohn's version of this last poem captures the speaker's half-articulate longing:

> Your Greek is always beautiful and
> musical.
> But now we want all of your
> craftsmanship.
> Into a foreign tongue our pain and
> love are passing.
> Pour your Egyptian feeling into a
> foreign tongue.
>
> Raphael, your verses should be
> written
> so that they have, you know,
> something of our lives within them,
> so that the rhythm and every
> phrasing makes it clear
> that an Alexandrian is writing of an
> Alexandrian.

"For Ammon" is partly about translation's impossibility, which is also a metaphor for the way words can't hold life: the "foreign tongue" (in this case, Greek) itself becomes Ammon's tomb. As a poet who lived in several languages, Cavafy knew this well; Mendelsohn feels it, too. Writing about mirrors in *The Elusive Embrace*, he thinks of Catullus' (heterosexual, Latin) version of Sappho (bisexual, Greek): "If you hold Catullus up to Sappho, an infinitely long corridor of reflections opens up. If you lose yourself in it, you can learn something about desire." Translation is the most intimate form of criticism, requiring you to inhabit another's verbal skin, try out his gestures, guess how he would move if your mother tongue were his.

Mendelsohn wants nothing less than Ammon's friend: to offer, "as much as possible, a Cavafy who looks, feels, and sounds in English the way he looks, feels, and sounds in Greek," which means translating meter as well as meaning. Dalven, Keeley and Sherrard dispensed with rhyme and made Cavafy sound modern; Forster announced in an essay that Cavafy didn't use rhyme at all. Until now, only the early versions by John Mavrogordato and the poet's brother John (worth reading, and available on the website of the Cavafy Archive: cavafy.com) tried extensively to reproduce the poet's formal choices. Mendelsohn analyses them in detail in his introduction and sometimes manages to find English approximations—for instance in "Walls," where rhymes (in Greek, homophonous line endings) add to the feeling of being trapped, or in the Symbolist-influenced poem "Chandelier," where blazing candles evoke the bliss and danger of consuming passion:

> The light that appears is no ordinary
> light.
> The pleasure of this heat has not
> been fashioned
> for bodies that too easily take fright.

Mendelsohn also appreciates Cavafy's subtle use, in almost every poem, of Greek's different registers—the formal *katharevousa*, or purified tongue, invented by Enlightenment scholars, and the colloquial demotic—and does his best to find English equivalents: Latinate words and formal syntax versus Anglo-Saxon phrases.

But every translation involves inevitable loss. Some of my reservations about Mendelsohn's are admittedly pedantic, and wouldn't arise had he not set the bar so high. History is visible inside the Greek language like gradations of blue in deep water; the very useful division into formal and demotic can't quite account for that continuity. As a classicist, Mendelsohn tends to favor the root meanings of words, many of which have changed over the centuries, rather than the medieval or modern ones. Often this is enriching; sometimes, though, it seems un-

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necessarily fussy. In the great poem "The God Abandons Antony," the painful, ordinary word *apetychan* ("failed") is rendered as "ill-starred" because its root is *tychi*, "luck" or "fortune"; something of the poem's pathos is diminished. Not surprisingly, he is also less attuned to Cavafy's Byzantine resonances. A meter Cavafy favors in which short half-lines are vertically broken by white space is not just "jaunty," as Mendelsohn puts it (following, to be fair, the Greek poet George Seferis, who called it a "tango" rhythm), but also evocative of the Orthodox liturgy, adding a further twist to Cavafy's ironies.

A larger problem, for me, has to do with Mendelsohn's ear for English iambic rhythms. Music, as he acknowledges, was vital for Cavafy, whose Greek iambs have such fluency that early critics dismissed him as prosaic. At times, Mendelsohn catches this perfectly, as in his version of the short poem "Voices," which is the best I've read:

> Imagined voices, and beloved, too,
> of those who died, or of those who are
> lost unto us like the dead.
>
> Sometimes in our dreams they speak to us;
> sometimes in its thought the mind will hear them.
>
> And with their sound for a moment there return
> sounds from the first poetry of our life—
> like music, in the night, far off, that fades away.

Elsewhere, though, the lines seem to limp and trip—like the last line of "Ithaca"—often because they stay too close to Cavafy's syntax. Here, for example, is the last stanza of "Sculptor From Tyana":

> But this work here is my favorite of all,
> which I made with the greatest care and deep feeling:
> him, one warm day in summer
> when my thoughts were ascending to ideal things,
> him I stood dreaming here, the young Hermes.

The natural stress of the words ("favorite of all," "deep feeling," "young Hermes") pushes against the meter in a way that contributes nothing to the sense; Cavafy's metrical variations are precisely placed, reflecting the sculptor's slightly nervous efforts to impress the visitors he is showing around his studio. In Greek it is common to begin a sentence with an accusative pronoun ("him") for emphasis, and "dream" is often used as a transitive verb; in English both feel awkward and undermine the suggestion at the poem's close that the sculptor's feelings soar before the image of his desire. As an inflected language, Greek has a very variable and expressive word order, which means quite differently from word order in English; to reproduce it literally only flattens the English verse and makes the poem seem construed rather than reimagined. Cavafy's delicately delineated characters—confections of tone and nuance, allusion and elision—don't always survive their journey into a foreign tongue.

Mendelsohn's may not be a great poet's Cavafy. (For a hint of what that could be like, read the small handful of translations by James Merrill, first published in *Grand Street* in 1987.) But it is perhaps the next best thing: the Cavafy of a brilliant critic who has a true and deep affinity for the poet—and who has succeeded in giving him to us whole for the first time. Somewhere, in some neo-Platonic heaven, the Greek and English tongues may touch in a more perfect union. In the meantime, as the Alexandrian knew so well, every great labor carries its flaws within it. And if that labor was undertaken for love, as this one surely was, they are all the more poignant and forgivable. ■

The Lost Years

by MADISON SMARTT BELL

Red and Black in Haiti
Radicalism, Conflict, and Political Change, 1934–1957.
By Matthew J. Smith.
North Carolina. 278 pp. Paper $24.95.

The large segment of the Haitian population that is unable to read or write inhabits an oral history culture, which produces, when looking into the past, a curious foreshortening. First comes the Haitian Revolution of 1791–1804, the only successful slave revolution in history and an event with whose fundamentals practically all Haitians are reasonably conversant. Then there's a compressed, indeterminate period of confused and repetitious instability, ending with President Woodrow Wilson's decision in 1915 to use the collection of outstanding American and French loans as a pretext for installing Marines in Haiti to prevent the election of an anti-American president. Following the close of the US occupation in 1934 is another indeterminate period of confusion, ending with the erection of the Duvalier dictatorship, a *père et fils* monolith that, in its iron duration from 1957 to 1986, still stands taller than anything else on the Haitian historical horizon except for the founding revolution. (Jean-Claude Duvalier assumed power upon the death of his father, François, in 1971.) This foreshortening effect is not without certain advantages; ordinary Haitians tend to feel much more immediately connected to the events of their nation's origin than we in the United States do to ours. Yet how Haiti got from the radicalism of the revolution to the corrupt and bloody Duvalier regime, and thence to the ever more desperate conditions of the present, still tends to be a matter of mystery, both to Haitians and also to outside observers.

In recent years, in large part because of the vogue for postcolonial studies, many more Anglophone historians of Haiti have been drawn to the Haitian Revolution. The American occupation has also been reasonably well examined, as has the Duvalier regime, while the cyclical rises and falls, from 1990 to 2004, of the once and future President Jean-Bertrand Aristide have been practically drowned in ink. But with the exception of the Duvalier period, these well-studied eras all involve Haiti's critical and sometimes violent interactions with foreign powers; the nation's politics get far less attention from non-Haitian analysts. With *Red and Black in Haiti*, Matthew Smith intends to remedy that neglect, in part, with a minutely detailed examination of the period from 1934 to 1957, when Haiti emerged from the years of US occupation and moved, inexorably or not, toward the Duvalier dictatorship.

In the Haitian context, black often stands for African and red for *milat*, the Haitian word for people of mixed European and African blood. This color symbolism dates to the declaration of independence in Gonaïves on January 1, 1804, when Haiti's first head of state, Jean-Jacques Dessalines, ordered the white band to be removed ceremoniously from the tricolor of the vanquished French and the red and blue bands to be sewn back

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together to create a new and uniquely Haitian flag. The flag alteration represented the eradication of the white race as a concept and suggested a new, firmer unity of the black African and *milat* populations. Indeed, the Constitution issued by Dessalines in 1805 stated, "The national colors shall be black and red." (Smith uses the statement as the epigraph to his introduction.) Under Dessalines, the Haitian flag was modified accordingly, but subsequent rulers restored the red and the blue. Duvalier *père*, who inhaled a great gust of inspiration from Dessalines's remarkable ruthlessness, brought back the black-and-red flag after seven years of rule, as Smith reminds us in his conclusion.

The postoccupation period lacks the clarity of such symbolism. Viewed in extreme close-up, it can be a bewildering welter of evanescent mini-movements, groupuscules, political parties and publications mutating almost too rapidly for the eye to follow. Smith tries to order the confusion by devoting a chapter to each presidency of the period: Sténio Vincent (1934–41), Élie Lescot (1941–45), Dumarais Estimé (1946–50) and Paul Magloire (1950–56). He also traces persistent trends across these four successively collapsing administrations and follows the longer trajectories of certain significant political actors, notably the populist labor leader Daniel Fignolé, in whom Smith finds a considerable but limited resemblance to the latter-day Aristide. The silhouette of François Duvalier drifts deep in these turbulent waters, like the shadow of a shark whose fin only rarely breaks the surface of events.

The US occupation brought Haiti a superimposed stability and considerable progress in infrastructure development, but at the price of enormous national humiliation. The Marines imported Jim Crow segregation and drafted labor with a press-gang system called the *corvée*, which resembled slavery to an alarming degree. Whether the United States intentionally added a layer of insult by staffing the Haitian mission with white Southerners has been much discussed; in fact, given that reflexive racism was universal throughout the United States at the time, it hardly mattered if the Marines in Haiti were Southern or not. For a nation founded by African slaves who had expelled their white masters in a violent revolution, the racist paternalism of the US presence was hard, if not impossible, to swallow; there was indeed some armed resistance to the occupation, but it was expeditiously repressed by the Marines.

As Smith reports, a movement toward a restoration of black pride had been stirring in Haiti before Franklin Roosevelt ended the US occupation. But Haiti, styled a "black republic" by outsiders, was never monochromatically that. In the United States, until quite recently, race has been perceived in rigid black and white, thanks to our inheritance of a British slave system that legally defined anyone with as little as one-sixteenth African blood to be a Negro. Haiti emerged from the French slave system, which recognized persons of mixed African and European blood as a third race: *mulâtre* or, more politely, *gens de couleur*. These children were likely to be acknowledged by their white fathers, and sons were given an education, often in France. By 1791 the colored population was almost as large as the white, and the *gens de couleur* owned substantial property, including slaves, though under colonial rule they had no political rights whatsoever. After the success of the revolution, and with the benefit of an enormous head start in education, as well as the accumulation of wealth and the experience of managing labor and capital, the colored population evolved into the core of today's Haitian elite.

COURTESY BIBLIOTHÈQUE NATIONALE D'HAÏTI

A photograph of Daniel Fignolé that appeared in the newspaper *Chantiers*, in 1946

From the revolution forward, this mostly light-skinned elite successfully concentrated most of Haiti's wealth, while conserving the French language (as opposed to the French-African Kreyòl spoken by the majority of the population) and as much of French culture as possible. Over time, the status of the *milat* became a matter of class as well as pigmentation; Smith prefers the Kreyòl word because, unlike the purely racial English term "mulatto" or the French *mulâtre*, it encompasses class. Though class mobility has not been unknown, the race/class–based cleavage of Haitian society remains very deep and is thus an essential facet of Smith's study.

The Constitution produced in 1805 by Dessalines abolished the very idea of race, at least rhetorically, by defining *all* Haitian citizens as black—a description extended not only to the colored minority but also to the few Europeans (doctors, notaries and the like) whom Dessalines spared and permitted to remain in Haiti on the grounds that they might be useful to the new society. This constitutional clause was an extraordinarily progressive measure on the part of a dictator better remembered for his ruthlessness. However, it wasn't much honored by Dessalines's successors. Following Dessalines's assassination in 1806, political rule was gradually secured by *milat* leaders Alexandre Pétion and Jean-Pierre Boyer (who like Dessalines had played significant military roles in the revolution). The nucleus of the elite continued to consolidate, and this group eventually realized that its position would be safer and more profitable if the tremendous black majority was left mostly to its own devices.

But a strictly racial explanation of postrevolutionary social cleavage can't account for the kind of cultural divisions noted by the anthropologist Gérard Barthélemy. As of 1791, 800,000 slaves had been brought to the colony from Africa, and the success of the revolution permitted them and their descendants to carry on African folkways with little significant interruption. On the other side of the divide were not only the well-educated, property-holding *gens de couleur* but also a fair number of Creole (meaning born in the colony) blacks, with a sometimes considerable degree of European acculturation. Toussaint Louverture, without whose catalytic role the revolution could never have happened, is the supreme representative of this group. Creole blacks were bound by race to the African-born majority, but their social, political and economic interests were often closer to those of the colored elite.

Vastly outnumbered as it was, and continues to be, by the black majority, the colored elite could neither rule nor protect its property without the cooperation of black representatives in government—and those representatives would not play their part unless they were given some share of real power. Over time the elite formed an uneasy power-sharing arrangement with an emerging black political class. In the first years after the revolution the factions in power discovered,

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somewhat painfully, that there was no way to compel the black majority to return to plantation labor, and eventually they simply turned their backs on that majority. Indifference was more or less reciprocal. The black majority, called "African" during the revolutionary period, gradually became known as *moun andeyo* (outsiders, country people), *gwo zotey* ("big toes," for the fact that most went barefoot) or simply peasants. They had their own language, Kreyòl, and their own culture, revolving around the vodou religion, often fused with Catholicism. The infrequent attention they received from the state was likely to be hostile.

Tensions between the black nationalist political class and the *milat* elite have driven the political cycle in Haiti for two centuries, and the postoccupation period Smith chronicles is a microcosm of them. Though the popular majority has frequently been instrumental in installing new regimes, it has always been induced to do so through the same familiar dance of seduction and abandonment. Rarely has any genuine populist obtained a substantial grip on national power, and no such leader has ever held power for long. Real democracy, even the idea that the Haitian state should serve the interests of the Haitian people, is a goal desired by many, detested by some and as yet achieved by no one.

Viewing Haiti's domestic politics through conventional Marxist or other radical-left lenses has seldom proven fruitful for theorists or political actors on the scene. To the extent that Smith concentrates on orthodox radicals and the movements they attempted to found, he is compelled to tell a story of their failure to gain durable purchase on the realities of the Haitian world. The Haitian masses—*moun andeyo*—stubbornly decline to be herded into the categories chosen for them by either right-wing repressive governments or left-wing activists. An indigenous Haitian populism does exist, but it will not conform to imported ideology or political practice.

A Communist party formed in Haiti in the early 1930s included formidable intellectuals like Max Hudicourt and Etienne Charlier, and also one of Haiti's finest novelists, Jacques Roumain. Sténio Vincent's regime took their activities seriously enough to imprison Roumain and Hudicourt for a time and later to drive them into exile. But Roumain, Hudicourt and other leaders of the Parti Communiste Haïtien (PCH) sprang from the elite, and Smith reports that "the scant evidence of the early mobilization activities of the communists suggests that the following was very small and strongest among more privileged students primarily drawn to Marxist ideas out of curiosity."

Meanwhile, another social movement was emerging, more discreetly, among a different group. Both the white occupiers and the Haitian elite tended to dismiss popular Haitian culture, and especially its connections to vodou, as a haplessly barbaric superstition. Then in 1928, the writer Jean-Price Mars published *Ainsi parla l'oncle*, which began "to integrate popular Haitian thought into the discipline of traditional ethnography," thus treating it as a cultural asset and making it a basis for a new "cultural nationalism." Mars and his students, who included Lorimer Dénis and the young François Duvalier, enjoyed elite prerogatives of education and intellectualism but were culturally closer to the black Haitian majority. In 1938 Duvalier and Dénis founded a quarterly called *Les Griots*, with the poets Carl Brouard and Clément Magloire *fils*, and through it undertook a sort of roots-recovery mission. As Smith explains, they argued that "vodou as the spiritual expression of the Haitian majority should be 'embraced by all Haitians.'" Alienation from the Eurocentric attitudes of the light-skinned elite (which were personified by the first two postoccupation presidents, Vincent and Lescot) was intrinsic to Griot thinking, and cultural nationalism evolved rapidly toward black nationalism, labeled either *noiriste* or *authentique*. Intellectually and artistically, the *noirisme* of the Griots expanded into the pan-African *négritude* movement, which began in France in the 1930s and soon became influential throughout the Caribbean.

Intellectual *noirisme* advanced discreetly in a Haitian political climate governed by supreme indifference to the popular black majority. Vincent—"a *milat* intellectual who grew up without many of the privileges of others in his class," according to Smith—did his best to completely ignore the horrific massacre of thousands of Haitian peasants by the Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo's soldiers and paramilitaries along the Dominican border in 1937. Vincent's indifference was so acute that it outraged even some of his own military commanders, who could have stopped at least part of the slaughter if Vincent had authorized them to do so. The scandal eventually brought down Vincent's administration, though not before he had taken the brief, desperate measure of declaring it a dictatorship.

Vincent's successor, Élie Lescot, a *milat* who sprang from a middle-class family in the north of Haiti, governed during the period of World War II, pursuing the interests of the elite without much regard to consequences for the majority. In partnership with the United States, he expelled peasants from more than 100,000 hectares of land, razing their homes and destroying more than a million fruit trees in an ultimately unsuccessful effort to cultivate rubber on a large plantation scale. There was also the notorious "anti-superstition campaign" of 1942, which (though enforced by the military) was instigated less by the state than by the Catholic clergy—even though Catholicism had coexisted with vodou peacefully enough for most of the century and a half since independence. Enough *hounfòs* (vodou temples) were wrecked, drums destroyed and sacred trees cut down to put all the practitioners of the persecuted religion (the sum total of the black majority) in a mood for retribution.

At the same time, Daniel Fignolé joined the *noiriste* movement, publishing criticisms of Lescot and the light-skinned elite in movement publications such as *Chantiers* and *Le Réveil*. A member by birth of *moun andeyo*, he had the talent and good fortune to win a place in one of Port-au-Prince's superior high schools, and later he taught mathematics in several of them, winning influence over groups of students who were avowed Marxists (though Fignolé was not). In the charisma of Fignolé (reminiscent of

Ghost Poem

The story begins
Waiting for the trick
When after life
Death ends

The night goes on
The sick sea
As much as possible
Comes to me

In the form of
But not alive
In the words from
But not dead

We wed or end
Swallowed by
Sick with
And again

LAURA MORIARTY

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the charisma of Aristide), Dénis and Duvalier saw a chance to bring home to the black majority the ideas of black nationalism the Griots had been quietly incubating. Black nationalism, they thought, could be a means of empowerment for that majority.

The overthrow of Lescot's government began with a student strike and demonstration—the student leaders thought of themselves as Marxists but were perhaps more immediately influenced by French Surrealism in the person of André Breton, who had spent some time in Haiti in 1945. The students were soon joined by striking workers in Port-au-Prince—the labor groups that became Fignolé's power base. Vodou drumming was heard in the hills above the capital as various bourgeois enterprises burned. At the onset of the strike police tried to beat the students into submission with batons, and eventually a couple of dozen people were killed. But Lescot's administration apparently lacked the will (later to be found by Presidents Magloire and Duvalier) to conduct a murderous repression. Lescot fled Haiti on January 11, 1946, as control of the government was assumed by a military junta including Magloire.

Smith calls this tumult "the Haitian Revolution of 1946," and the election that followed, like the founding revolution, brought a member of the black majority to the helm of the state, though not the man advocated by the most powerful organization of the left: the Mouvement Ouvrier Paysan, founded by Fignolé and joined by Denis and Duvalier during the 1946 elections. (The Mouvement's acronym, MOP, was meant to have the Anglophone implication of a clean sweep.) Fignolé threw his support behind Démosthènes Pétrus Calixte, deploying his remarkable gift for oratory in radio broadcasts and his ability to mobilize the black majority onto the streets of the capital (a technique called *woulo konmpresè*, for steam-roller). But this was not a general election; despite popular pressure for Calixte, two ballots in the Senate elected Dumarsais Estimé instead. Furious and alarmed at this outcome, Fignolé, Duvalier and Denis went briefly into hiding for fear of reprisals; but they were soon placated and reassured by offers of posts in Estimé's administration. The *noiristes* accepted Estimé as one of their own.

The reformist fervor of 1946 dwindled into disappointment over the four years of the Estimé presidency. Despite a genuine will to "improve social conditions" and increase "black middle-class access to state power," Smith writes, Estimé's administration could not root out a deeply entrenched system of corruption in government. Tensions between government and the unsatisfied populace grew so sharp that Estimé resorted to repressive measures—unsuccessfully, as he had lost the support of the army. In 1950 he was overthrown by a military coup led by Magloire, who as president, Smith writes, "was determined to eliminate all forms of radicalism." Magloire was fully willing to implement state repression, which he termed *kansonfèrisme* ("iron-pants-ism"); but it was his successor in military dictatorship, Duvalier, who not only refined and elaborated the techniques of state terror but practiced them with such pre-emptive ruthlessness that the totality of his grasp on power remains unsurpassed by any head of state in Haitian history. The most sincere and significant populist figure of the period, Daniel Fignolé, served as provisional president between Magloire and Duvalier—for less than three weeks, until he was forced into exile by a US-endorsed military coup.

Exactly what Smith intends by his book's striking title is left to the reader to ascertain (at least till the very end of the work). The colors red and black have one implication in casino gambling (to pick a random example), another in the iconography of left politics, where red is often associated with communism and black with anarchy. The Haitian political scene offers plenty of anarchy in a pure, unorganized and nonideological form, but if Smith means to contrast that whirlwind with the generally unsuccessful adventures of orthodox Marxist politics in Haiti, he does not say so.

In the penultimate paragraph of his book, Smith speaks of an "era of red and black, defined by a struggle between Marxists and *noiristes*, *milat* and black, and state and civil society." The indecisiveness of Smith's grappling with the title phrase is symptomatic of a limitation of this book, which is almost overwhelmingly thorough, exhaustive and authoritative in its assembly of facts but comparatively tentative in its conclusions (which come at the end of each chapter, labeled as such). At times one wishes for a synthetic, bolder (perhaps riskier) interpretation of this wealth of information, in the manner of, for example, Alex Dupuy (*The Prophet and Power*) or Michel-Rolph Trouillot (*Haiti: State Against Nation*). But so many people have been confidently dead wrong about Haiti so many times that Smith has every right to be cautious. It is a country easily misunderstood, and one has to look for a very long time, at a dismayingly vast array of material, to begin to understand what one is seeing. ■

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Fleeting Exchanges

by JANA PRIKRYL

Helen Levitt's famous photographs of children colonizing the curbs of Harlem and the Lower East Side during World War II—still images saturated with movement, banter and drama—are almost too easy to appreciate. Is it not overly endearing, somehow, that she captured a scrum of little boys in dark overcoats and penciled mustaches waltzing together on an avenue sparsely populated by stately and slender couples off in the distance? Looking at the image, it *is* hard not to smile. Other photographs, ones that fascinate or disturb more than delight, also engage our very personal interest: you look into these long-departed New Yorkers' faces, with their instantly readable moods, as if they were your own. Their direct gazes seem to match Levitt's reluctance to judge them. In almost all of her work, she managed to fix in time unrepeatable encounters on the city's streets while outrunning the often moralizing limits of the documentary mode—a disinterested way of seeing that could lead to her classification, usually in the penultimate paragraph of chapters on street photography, as a kind of charming footnote complicating both the gravity of Walker Evans and the principled artlessness of Robert Frank and his influential disciples.

In her early 20s (having dropped out of high school in 1930, one semester shy of graduating), Levitt frequented the Photo League without becoming a member. Though acquainted with Henri Cartier-Bresson and accustomed to collaborating with Evans and James Agee, she never belonged to a circle that might have pressed her to use the medium to promote a message. If a consistent meaning emerges from her images, it is idiosyncratic, fused with the meaning of her mortal subjects and easy to mistake as being not wholly serious and certainly not cerebral. What her photos showed—even in the early 1940s, when a photographer roaming a hardscrabble town or a desolate city block might be expected to favor scenes of dignity and endurance, in the socially conscious vein of the Farm Securities Administration—was how wide a range of human expressiveness could be compressed into small black-and-white snapshots.

Levitt died this past March at the age of 95, and the Laurence Miller Gallery on Fifty-seventh Street, which has represented her work for twenty-two years, revamped a spring exhibition that had been planned with her help into one memorializing her lifework. Some of the iconic street scenes and images of children were on the walls, but so too were stolen glimpses of weary subway riders, captured with a hidden camera that Levitt used with Walker Evans on underground safaris between 1938 and 1941. There were also mid-sidewalk portraits of dames and dandies looking like castoffs from a Diane Arbus shoot; snapshots of chalk drawings, like ancient hieroglyphs, made by children on the streets; and color photographs from the second half of her career depicting with rich, repeating palettes a drab and dilapidated New York that was already a ruin in the making. In one of the classic children shots (dated "c. 1940," as nearly all of them are), three girls knotted together on the sidewalk push one another around, their hostilities undercut by a smaller boy who has hoisted up the skirt of one girl to peek at her undies. Levitt's friend James Agee wrote of the image in an essay of 1946: "the little boy…still acts with the angelic directness of his world at its most free; the little girls… embody a later, sadder stage."

Photograph by Helen Levitt, New York City, circa 1940

© ESTATE OF HELEN LEVITT/LAURENCE MILLER GALLERY

What Agee perceived in Levitt's images was a kind of primordial humanity alive in the most fleeting exchanges. Exchange was the locus of her vision: a characteristic Levitt photograph of New York frames an ensemble cast, or at least a lively duo, whose reflecting glances or poses thread the meaning of the image. I'm thinking of the three boys hiding on a stoop with toy guns in hand, scouting for the enemy, the most nervous boy crouched up in a doorway, stealing a glance at the other two below him on the steps, who look eager to make a run for it. The perfect choreography of this shot—each boy's body aligned along a different axis, and these lines seeming to domino down toward the empty right-hand side of the picture, where danger awaits—is a feat of composition Levitt had learned from Cartier-Bresson, whom she met in 1935 and whose crisp, poetic instincts helped persuade her to take up the camera. (By then she had been apprenticed to a commercial photographer for several years but, so the story goes, hadn't found a way to push her own aesthetic ambitions further.) What makes this shot typically Levitt is that the composition tells us less about formal perfection, or a "decisive moment," than what each of these three boys is feeling and who each of them is: the liquid action of the moment seems to flow through the boys poised on the steps but freezes into a lump in the third boy's throat.

Jana Prikryl is on the editorial staff of The New York Review of Books.

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By 1943, at the age of 30, Levitt had her first show at MoMA, and in 1944 she and Agee and their friend Janice Loeb, a painter, made a silent film together, *In the Street* (it was also on view at the Laurence Miller Gallery). Fourteen minutes long and collaged from strips of footage of New Yorkers sharing the sidewalks—mostly children but also grown-ups and old folks—the charming, pointillist film suggests something about Levitt's use of a still camera: the moving eye of the motion picture seems to blink as fast as its subjects, cutting quickly from moment to moment, barely willing to disclose a single encounter in full. It's as if the filmmakers had cropped their attention spans to match those of the children they were filming, making us feel we're one of them—an effect Levitt refined with great subtlety in her photographs. At one point in the movie a tiny boy, clad in a ragged dress that falls to his shoes, smiles at the camera and then hares off down the pavement, all the way to the end of the block; we watch until he reaches the corner—at which point the camera quivers a bit and glances down, as if at its own feet, having lost interest in the toddler. Cut. (In 1949, when an Oscar nomination for her second documentary, *The Quiet One*, brought Levitt to Hollywood, Charlie Chaplin got to see *In the Street* and was so delighted by the boy that he perfectly mimicked another scene, in which the toddler does a little dance that consists of running furiously in place.)

© ESTATE OF HELEN LEVITT/LAURENCE MILLER GALLERY

Photograph by Helen Levitt, New York City, circa 1940

In Levitt's classic photographs, a vision of the responsive, reciprocating nature of the human animal emerges: to say that we are "social beings" seems inadequate after spending time with her people, who don't just mingle but appear to make companions of anyone caught with them in her frame. They endlessly perplex and console and appreciate one another. Quite often they serve as living mirrors for each other, as in a picture of two older women standing near a stoop, the one throwing back her head with glee, the other just beginning to grin, unsure why, mustering a certain inner generosity. It seems significant that Levitt's first preserved photograph is of two Gypsy girls with identical jet-black braids and floral-print dresses in Central Park (neither of them quite in focus), moving fluidly in counterpoint to each other, with a boulder rising diagonally between them: the composition has the furling symmetry of a playing card. Levitt was fascinated with how people shared space, and how each person's individuality bent as it sought out another's.

In the last decade Levitt's photographs have reappeared in a number of lush hardcovers published by powerHouse: *Crosstown* in 2001, *Here and There* in 2004, *Slide Show* in 2005 and *Helen Levitt* last year. Looking at these volumes today, one is struck by something else: how many of her New Yorkers (both young and old) are caught in less than adorable poses. It turns out that her abiding interest in playful figures led her not just to waltzing boys but also to boys bent double, adults hunched over, kids fallen in a heap. In one photograph a young fellow thrusts his posterior at the camera while what must be a rubber ball pokes from his back pocket, and nearby a friend (or enemy), also facing away from the camera, crumples on the sidewalk in a fetal position. There's the menace that coruscates from the iconic image of two boys slithering up a tree in white, triangular bandit masks. There is also the arguably more ambiguous photograph of a parked dark sedan, glossy and regal with its voluptuous 1940s curves, and a blond boy wearing only shorts and shoes jackknifing next to it. He's hugging himself and we can't see his face, and a stray piece of cardboard litters the sidewalk a few feet before him. Is he trying to read it? Is he trying to see under the car? Why is he making himself so awkward?

In the 1950s Levitt worked as a film editor for Luis Buñuel, and after that caesura—during which, coincidentally, Robert Frank diverted the direction of street photography with his crass, discomposed collection *The Americans*—she switched to color photography and seemed even more drawn to snapping people bent over, contorted or hanging half out of unattractive cars. Once you notice this minor theme, it becomes easier to see that quite often she sought not the drama of people engaging with each other but the many odd ways they fail to connect, fail even to express themselves within the implied narrative of their own portraits. The several famous photographs of children in masks—the subject and style of the images working in perfect equilibrium against each other, to attract and repel at the same time—seem to fall into this category. Likewise, Levitt's pictures of solitary individuals (like her snapshots of kids' chalk drawings) often vibrate with an anxious energy, an impulse that flows directly toward the camera only to deflect our interest.

Consider the well-known photograph of a boy wearing a makeshift costume, a cowl of fabric hiding his face. An intriguing element of the show at the Laurence Miller Gallery was a series of first proofs that Levitt didn't want released in her lifetime—an opportunity for postmortems of her work that the gallery chose not to pass up. These outtakes show her prospecting for the right composition, and they offer slightly lesser alternatives to some of her most famous pictures. In the final print the costumed child stands alone in a doorway, dominating the frame like a withdrawn gatekeeper; in the proofs he was also photographed twice with a companion, a little girl who peekaboos from a shoulder-height screen (in the definitive shot the screen is only partly shown beside the hooded child). What Levitt saw was that cropping the photo down to a single subject forces the viewer to look at the child who is hidden. Our frustrated gaze, seeking human contact and gaining none, fairly hums with alarm. ■

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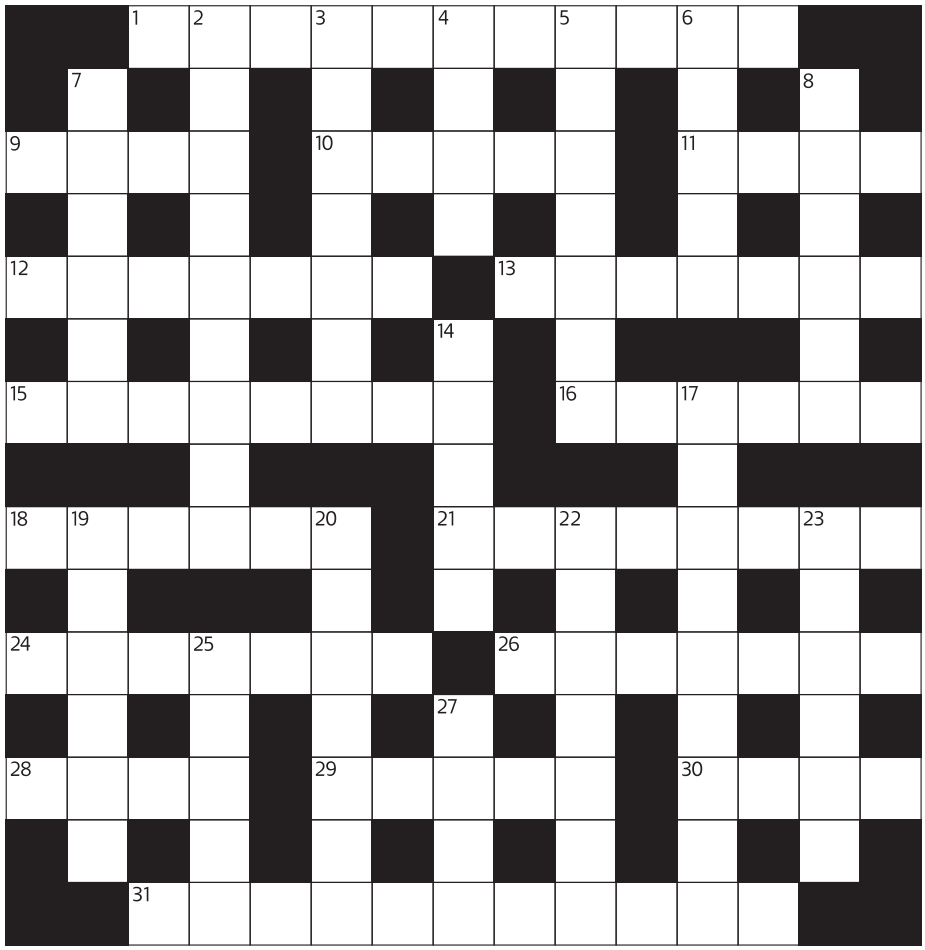

ACROSS

1 Some artists are so concerned—being diffident. (11)

9 and **10** I get gongs to ring the changes as the way one starts. (4,5)

11 The sort of 27 that cod follows, may also! (4)

12 Things that happen every July are found in these quarters. (7)

13 A silly person comes in to make a face, and then collapse. (4,3)

15 Teacher has a bit of old money inside the ore diggings. (8)

16 The south of France comes to a bad end, which is unexpected. (6)

18 Ready to precede it in the race, and comes before "go"? (3,3)

21 Taking a chance on being right here! (8)

24 To tell the truth, this isn't doing it! (7)

26 Made by the escapee. (7)

28 and **29** See 4 down

30 Capable of making a bale of it. (4)

31 18 twice, perhaps, and then takes off quickly! (They're real suckers!) (6,5)

DOWN

2 What the teacher does is sin badly, and sort of strut about a number of it. (9)

3 Might be a topper of what the snooty type does to you! (4-3)

4, and **28** and **29** across You might find a sleeper with it, and a diner is expected. (8,5)

5 Could one of them be called "The Home of the Brave"? (7)

6 You might expect such saints to bring things to you—but they're supposed to be little bits of time… (5)

7 …or a little bit of time, but not the first example. (6)

8 What one may do to clean up the tree. (6)

14 Talks a bit boastfully, but possibly grabs an answer out of it. (5)

17 What someone tried vainly to do to "a character high" in *Trial by Jury*. (9)

19 He's the boss—at least on paper! (6)

20 A very small drink for a wee one! (4,3)

22 Possibly let out around near confusion, like the city of Rome. (7)

23 Almost a point to being ahead of time? (6)

25 Waits for a favorable opportunity, not first class on a fateful date. (5)

27 What some do to the floor, being the sign of a soft pilot. (4)

APOLOGIES! There were two errors in the July 6 issue. In Puzzle No. 3176, the clue to 4 down should have included "500," not "50." In the solution to No. 3175, 13 down should be "scriveners," not "scrivesers." The culprit (who "would prefer not to") has been ordered to copy the solution 500 times.

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SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3178

F	I	N	I	S	H	■	S	P	U	M	A	N	T	E
R	■	O	■	H	■	T	■	H	■	O	■	E	■	S
O	U	T	C	O	M	E	■	O	P	U	L	E	N	T
T	■	H	■	O	■	N	■	T	■	T	■	D	■	A
H	O	I	S	T	■	T	W	O	■	H	E	I	S	T
I	■	N	■	■	■	A	■	■	■	■	■	E	■	E
N	I	G	H	T	■	C	R	A	W	L	E	R	S	■
G	■	■	■	A	■	L	■	N	■	I	■	■	■	O
■	W	H	I	P	P	E	T	S	■	E	L	F	I	N
D	■	O	■	■	■	■	■	W	■	■	■	I	■	E
A	T	T	H	E	■	T	H	E	■	W	O	R	T	H
N	■	S	■	R	■	A	■	R	■	I	■	T	■	O
C	O	H	E	R	E	S	■	E	M	P	E	R	O	R
E	■	O	■	O	■	T	■	D	■	E	■	E	■	S
R	E	T	A	R	D	E	D	■	B	R	E	E	Z	E

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